

TRANSLATIONS  
AND  
TOMFOOLERIES

Translations and  
Tomfooleries. By  
Bernard Shaw.

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# JITTA'S ATONEMENT

BY

SIEGFRIED TREBITSCH

*Author of Genesung, Weltuntergang, Das Haus am Abhang, Tagwandler, Ein Muttersohn, Der Tod und die Liebe, Gefährliche Jahre, Spätes Licht, Die Frau ohne Dienstag, Der Geliebte, Die Last des Blutes, etc. etc.*

TRANSLATED BY

BERNARD SHAW



## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

SIEGFRIED TREBITSCH, a well-known Austrian novelist and playwright, was born in Vienna on the 21st December 1869. The list of his original works includes eight novels and volumes of stories, and six or seven plays, including *Frau Gitta's Sühne*, of which the present work is a translation. I have to stress the word *original*, because, with a devotion extraordinary in the case of a writer with a successful career open to him as an *original* writer, he has undertaken and carried out the heavy additional task of translating and introducing to the German-speaking public and to the German theatre the entire body of my own works, both literary and theatrical.

This enterprise is the more remarkable because it was begun at a time when my position in the English theatre was one not of good repute, but of infamy. I was rated in the theatrical world of London as an absurd pamphleteer, who had been allowed to display his ignorance of the rudiments of stage technique, and his hopeless incapacity for representing human nature dramatically or otherwise, in a few performances at coterie theatres quite outside recognized theatrical commerce. Trebitsch knew better. He also knew English. He was quite unknown to me when he appeared one day at my house and asked to see me with a view to his becoming my interpreter and apostle in Central Europe. I attempted to dodge his visit by asking my wife to see him and to explain politely that a proposal

## Translator's Note

to translate could be entertained only when made by the responsible manager of a theatre with a view to immediate production. The evasion failed ignominiously. My wife came to me and said that the young gentleman, though he seemed a very nice young gentleman, had swept aside her excuse with explosive contempt, and would take no denial. If I was to get rid of him (which she already regarded as doubtful policy) I must go down and do it myself. I came down; and the result was that the young gentleman carried the citadel by storm as successfully as he had carried the outworks. I did what I could to dissuade him from what seemed a desperate undertaking; but his faith in my destiny was invincible. I surrendered at discretion; and the result was that I presently found myself a successful and respected playwright in the German language whilst the English critics were still explaining laboriously that my plays were not plays, and urging me, in the kindest spirit, to cease my vain efforts to enter a profession for which Nature had utterly unfitted me. In the last decade of the nineteenth century I was deriving a substantial income as a playwright from America and Central Europe. Not until the middle of the first decade of the twentieth could I have lived by my theatrical earnings in London. To-day I have only to lift up my finger to attract a hundred translators. When Trebitsch volunteered for the job, the hundred would have fled from my invitation as one man.

It is not for me to say how far English drama is indebted to Herr Trebitsch for its present prestige abroad. It is for me to say that my personal debt to him is incalculable. When the horrible catastrophe of the war had torn Anglo-German relations to fragments, and only the fools who would not heed Mr. Lloyd George's warning to "stop snarling" could doubt the vital European necessity for mending them, I could do no less than take advantage of the fact that Trebitsch has written plays of his own, to translate one of them from German into English for the man who has translated so many plays from English into German.

There were technical difficulties: how great I never realized until I took the job in hand. At first I was pre-occupied with a quite minor matter. I can neither claim knowledge of the German language nor plead ignorance of it. I am like most literary persons: I have spent several holidays in Germany (mostly in Bayreuth), and have just managed to ask my way, and get what I wanted in the shops and railway stations, without the aid of an interpreter. The proverbial bits of Goethe and Wagner and Nietzsche are familiar to me; and when a German writes to me I can generally make out what he wants provided he uses the Latin and not the Gothic script. And that is all. When I opened the pages of Frau Gitta's Sühne, I was driven to the dictionary, only to discover that Trebitsch apparently does not use words that are in the dictionary. It was not by any process known to men of learning, but rather by some telepathic method of absorption, that I managed at last to divine, infer, guess, and co-invent the story of Gitta, or Jitta, as I have had to spell her to avert having her name pronounced with a hard G. Trebitsch is amiable enough to say that I have succeeded wonderfully; but even a very bad translation may be a wonderful feat for a translator who does not know the language.

However, when it comes to translating a play the mere translation is only the tiniest fraction of the business. I soon found that a literal translation would fail completely to convey the play to an Anglo-American audience. It was necessary to translate the audience as well as the play: that is, to translate Vienna into London and New York. And this involved translating one theatrical epoch into another. Vienna is still romantic in the manner of Verdi's operas, and modern in the manner of De Maupassant and Baudelaire. And as the conqueror always acquires some of the qualities of the conquered, even now that he no longer eats him, there is a touch of the east in Vienna, not only brought by the winds along the Danube, but left by the Turks when Sobieski drove them back

from the gates. Add to this that Vienna has never weaned itself from the sweet milk of eighteenth-century art, when even woe was a luxury, and the heroine could not die in gloom too deep to please the audience. When natural history (sometimes ambiguously called realism) is banished from the theatre, cruelty, horror and death become painless there, and even luxurious, because nobody believes in them. The most frightful torments may be heaped on the heroine until she dies of poison or a broken heart: the villain may, like the wicked Count in *Il Trovatore*, live only to *centuplicar la morte* of the hero in *mille atroci spasimi*, and the hero himself may not know a moment of happiness or security until misfortune dogs him to his death; yet no one will turn a hair: the more dreadful it all is the better it is liked, because romance can never come home to reality. To preserve this delicious anaesthesia there must be no bringing down to earth of the business by the disillusioning touch of comedy.

In England and America nowadays, such romance is privileged only in Italian Opera, and is not tolerated without the music. The Anglo-American audience wants a happy ending because it wants a credible ending, and therefore cannot bear an utterly unhappy one. It is true, as the late St John Hankin pointed out and illustrated by his *Plays With Happy Endings*, that the conventional happy ending is often as unhappy and disastrous as the marriages which foolish magistrates and police-court missionaries force on young people who have been no better than they ought to be. But the fact remains that in proportion as a play succeeds in producing an illusion of real life, it must dispense with the frantic agonies and despairs and poisonings and butcheries of the romantic theatre. Consequently, if you take a play written under the tyranny of a romantic audience and present it without modification to a comparatively matter-of-fact audience, it will miss its mark, and may even miss fire altogether.

To avert this result in the case of *Frau Gitta's Sühne*, I

have taken advantage of the fortunate circumstance that in real life the consequences of conjugal infidelity are seldom either so serious as they are assumed to be in romantic tragedy or so trivial as in farcical comedy. I may as well confess at once that in the original play Jitta lives miserably ever after, and that her husband bears malice, and presents a character-study much subtler and more elusive than you will gather from my frankly comedic British version of him. Also Trebitsch, being a German poet, has a certain melancholic delicacy which escapes my comparatively barbarous and hilarious occidental touch. I could not help suggesting, by a few translator's treacheries here and there, that the ill-assorted pair settle down on reasonable human terms, and find life bearable after all.

Trebitsch goes so far as to say "You have made my last act almost a comedy"; but he is too amiable to reproach me, and tolerates my variations, which affect, not the story itself, but only the key in which it ends. Though the assumptions of the audience as to what will happen after the fall of the curtain will be more cheerful in England and America than they were in Vienna, the action of the play remains unaltered. Nevertheless those who can should read the original, to the idiosyncratic literary quality of which I have been shamefully unable to do justice.

*Frau Gitta's Sühne* was first performed at the great Burgtheater of Vienna on the 3rd February 1920.

*Jitta's Atonement* was performed for the first time at the Grand Theatre, Fulham, London, on the 3rd February 1925, with Violet Vanbrugh in the title part.

It was performed for the first time in America at the Shubert Theatre, New York City, on the 6th January 1923, when Jitta was played by Bertha Kalich.

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# JITTA'S ATONEMENT

## ACT I

1920. *The drawing room in a flat in Vienna. It is fashionably decorated and elegantly furnished, but not homelike, as there are no books nor personal belongings nor household odds and ends lying about. The two photogravure reproductions of pictures on the walls, symmetrically placed at equal distances from the door, are of the refinedly aphrodisiac character considered de rigueur in hotels. But the place is not quite like a hotel sitting room, because there is very little furniture: only two seats, a couch, and a small table with a glass flower-vase and a mirror on it*

*It is an oblong room; and from the point of view of anyone looking towards the corner the long wall on the right has in the middle of it the door leading to the entrance hall; and the short wall on the left has an open door close to the corner through which a bed with rose-colored hangings is partly visible. In the same wall further forward from the same point of view is the fire-place.*

*The couch is in the corner, parallel to the longer wall, not quite close against it. A comfortable upholstered stool, really a chair without a back, is at the foot of the couch. This stool has a cushion on it which evidently belongs to the couch. The other seat, a chair with arms, is almost in the middle of the room, but nearer to the fire-place than to the door. The table stands near the corner of the fire-place.*

*It is almost dark.*

*Mrs Billiter, an elderly housekeeper, has something of the same undomesticated air as the room. Her hair, though not*

aggressively dyed, is still rather younger than her face. She is well dressed, like a hotel manageress. She opens the door, letting in some electric light from the hall. She has a silver tray in her hands, with a siphon, two tumblers, and a bottle on it. She switches on the light at the door, and crosses the room to the table, where she puts down the tray. She looks round the room to see whether it is tidy. She goes to the stool; takes the cushion from it; and puts it in its proper place on the couch.

Somebody rings at the outer door of the flat. Mrs Billiter goes out to open it.

A GIRL'S VOICE [the accent is not that of a lady] Gentleman ordered these. Suppose it's all right, isn't it?

MRS BILLITER'S VOICE. Yes. Just bring them in, and put them in the vase for me, will you?

Mrs Billiter returns, followed by a girl from the florist's shop, carrying a handsome present of flowers.

MRS BILLITER [pointing to the vase] There. I'll fetch some water.

She goes into the bedroom and switches on the light there. The roseate hangings of the bed appear to great advantage. The flower girl, on her way to the vase, stops fascinated.

Mrs Billiter returns with a jug from the bedroom wash-stand: a very pretty jug in rose color and gold.

The flower girl puts the roses into the vase; and Mrs Billiter fills it with water.

Mrs Billiter takes the jug back into the bedroom; and the girl steals after her to the door and peeps enviously in.

Mrs Billiter returns, putting out the bedroom light as she does so, and finds the girl at the door.

THE FLOWER GIRL. Just right for two, aint it?

MRS BILLITER [incensed] What do you mean, with your "Just right for two"?

THE FLOWER GIRL [grinning] Oh, it's nothing to me. But I know.

MRS BILLITER. You know too much, you do. Are they paid for?

THE FLOWER GIRL. Oh yes: that's quite all right. [She grins again, shewing no sign of going].

MRS BILLITER [peremptorily] Well? What are you waiting for? And what are you grinning at?

THE FLOWER GIRL. Aint the gentleman here? He promised to leave me something.

MRS BILLITER [impatiently groping in her purse and extracting a tip] Thats how they give themselves away, offering tips when they have no call to. [She gives her some money]. There! Now, out you go. I'm busy.

THE FLOWER GIRL [sarcastic] Sorry, I'm sure. Thanks awfully. [She goes to the door, but stops on hearing the outer door opened by a latch-key from without]. Oh, here is the gentleman.

*The gentleman enters. The girl ogles him. He recognizes her, and makes a gesture towards his pocket.*

MRS BILLITER [very decisively] Thats all right, sir: she's had what you promised. [To the girl, sternly] Good evening to you. [She sails to the door so formidably that the girl, after an ineffectual grimace, has to go].

*The moment the gentleman is left alone he shews signs of severe physical suffering. His ascent of the stairs has brought on an attack of angina pectoris. He makes his way to the stool, and collapses on it, struggling with the paroxysm. Mrs Billiter returns.*

MRS BILLITER [running to him] Oh dear, oh dear, has it come on again, sir?

THE GENTLEMAN [a little better] It's all right now, Mrs Billiter. I took the stairs too fast. I rush at them without thinking. [He rises, and tries to take off his overcoat. She helps him]. Thank you, Mrs Billiter. I—I—I— [gasping] Just a moment. Whew! [As the coat comes off he plunges to the arm-chair, and sinks into it].

MRS BILLITER. How often have I begged you never to walk upstairs but always to take the lift? And now see the state you are in!

THE GENTLEMAN. Dont look at me: it will only distress

you. Angina pectoris is a horrible thing; but it passes off soon. You can do nothing, thank you.

MRS BILLITER [*taking his hat and coat out into the vestibule*]. Dear! dear! dear!

*Rather dazed by the attack, he sits up, straightening his collar and coat rather irresolutely, and looking very careworn indeed. He is well dressed, on the verge of fifty, going grey, very distinguished in appearance and kindly in manner.*

MRS BILLITER [*returning*] Why will you never take the lift, sir? It isn't as if anyone in this house knew you. And for that matter you meet people on the stairs as well as in the lift.

THE GENTLEMAN. I know; but I mustn't let the liftmen see me coming here too often. People talk, even when they have to live by holding their tongues.

MRS BILLITER [*reproachfully*] Oh, sir!

THE GENTLEMAN [*quickly saving the situation*] Except you, Mrs Billiter. You are an exception to all the rules.

MRS BILLITER. It's you who are the exception, sir. I wish all the other gentlemen that keep rooms here on the quiet to enjoy themselves were like you. There are people and people in this world; and I know a gentleman when I see him. And I feel sure your lady is a real lady, and always the same lady; though of course I take care never to see her

THE GENTLEMAN. Thats very kind of you, Mrs Billiter. [*He rises to go to the table*].

MRS BILLITER [*stopping him*] Now do sit quiet a moment, sir. What was it you wanted?

THE GENTLEMAN. A mouthful of soda water.

MRS BILLITER. There: I'll get it for you. Sit down. [*He does so. She goes to the table and fills a glass from the siphon*]. If you would only let me put a drop of brandy in it?

THE GENTLEMAN [*shaking his head decisively*] It would probably kill me. I know. I am a doctor. [*He takes the glass from her*]. Thank you. [*He drinks*].

MRS BILLITER. You are not right yet. I can see it in your face.

THE GENTLEMAN [*hands her back the glass a little abruptly, and pulls himself together*]. !!!

MRS BILLITER. There! I shouldnt have said that. [*She replaces the glass on the table, snubbed*].

THE GENTLEMAN. Not at all: I know how anxious you are about me, and how kindly you mean it. But I am all right now; and I—I— [*he takes out his watch and looks at it*] I am expecting somebody.

MRS BILLITER [*taking the hint*] Yes, sir: I'm going. [*She crosses the room to the door, but turns for a moment appealingly before going out*]. But you will take the lift next time, sir, wont you? If anything were to happen to you—not that I think anything like that, of course; but—

THE GENTLEMAN. Of course not, Mrs Billiter. Still— [*he shrugs his shoulders*]!

MRS BILLITER. Yes, sir. And then what could I do but send for the police?

THE GENTLEMAN. Quite so, quite so. If I come again I will take the lift. I promise.

MRS BILLITER. Thank you, sir. Thank you kindly. [*She goes out, closing the door very softly behind her*].

*The gentleman, left alone, rises and goes to the table, where he takes up the mirror and looks at his wrinkles and his blanching hair. He shakes his head and puts the mirror down. Then he takes out a cigaret; puts it between his lips; takes out a match, and is about to strike it when the bell rings twice. His face lights up; he throws the match and the cigaret into the fire; and goes out eagerly to admit the visitor, leaving the door of the room open. Immediately afterwards a veiled lady hurries in like a hunted creature. He follows her; shuts the door; and comes to her in the middle of the room. They embrace.*

THE GENTLEMAN [*affectionately*] Why do you always look as if you were running away, and had just stumbled into my arms by chance?

THE LADY. I always feel as if my husband were lying in wait for me at the next turn.

THE GENTLEMAN. Well, suppose he were! You are not

afraid of poor Alfred, are you? At home you are a perfect tyrant to him.

JITTA. I should have no courage if he caught me. Besides, if we are found out there will be an end of everything

BRUNO. I almost wish we were found out.

JITTA. Why?

BRUNO. It would force us to stand by one another, and come out openly before all the world with our love.

JITTA [embracing him impulsively] Shall we?

BRUNO. There is my wife. Always my wife.

JITTA [recoiling from him impatiently, and throwing her cloak on the couch] Oh yes: Agnes. Always Agnes, Agnes, Agnes.

BRUNO. She has done nothing to deserve our betrayal of her: she has sacrificed her life to me. I can't face what she would suffer.

JITTA. Has she sacrificed more for you than you for her? It is not the thought of Agnes that holds me back. But the scandal would ruin you. [She takes off her hat, and puts it on the table].

BRUNO [with sudden energy] I want to be ruined. Oh, the life of a University professor. His respectability kills his mind. His wife's respectability kills her soul. They both become mere shells of their former selves: going through life in grooves, on rails like trams, envying the tinkers and gipsies. If it were not for Agnes I should commit some disgraceful offence to free myself.

JITTA. I am afraid disgrace would not mend matters I could not bear yours.

BRUNO. Nor I yours. We are in the net.

JITTA. Not here, Bruno. We have broken through the net into our dreamland. [Now that her hat and veil are off Jitta is revealed as one of those attractively refined women whose wistfully sensitive unsmiling mouths and tragic eyes not only make imaginative men fancy unfathomable depths in their natures, and something undefinably sad and splendid in their destinies, but actually force this conception on the women themselves, however common-

place their characters and circumstances may be. Jitta is nothing more extraordinary than the wife of a college don, and has done nothing more heretic than fall in love with another and more poetic don (also married); but to her lover and herself her life is as dignified and beautiful as her face, and their relations as nobly tragic as her eyes. So, as we are all a little like that, let us share their dream for a moment whilst she continues, sitting down beside him] You must brush off the bits of the broken net. [Tracing on his brow] There is a thread of it here, and here, and straight down here. [She kisses his brow]. No : they are not gone yet.

BRUNO. It is not the net. I can leave that behind when I come here into the dreamland. These last few months have been wonderful. But they have been terrible.

JITTA. Yes : wonderful and terrible. But they have been real, real. Life in the net is never real : it is all acting.

BRUNO. That is true. But there is something still more real than the dream.

JITTA. What is that?

BRUNO. The awakening.

JITTA. For me there will be no awakening.

BRUNO. There is always the tap at the door in the morning. The tap with bony knuckles. The caller.

JITTA. Death! Oh, why will you always harp on that? Death is nothing. Life with love is everything. Think, Bruno. We are here alone. There is nothing between us and happiness except the courage to grasp it. Can you never be happy?

BRUNO. Can any mortal be happy?

JITTA [suddenly prosaic and impatient] Yes : Alfred can. A glass of wine and a cigar can make Alfred happy. A vote of thanks can make Alfred happy. A cheque for £25 can make him happy. But I cannot make you happy.

BRUNO. Dearest love : you can, you do make me inexpressibly happy. So happy, that every time you go away from me, and I stand listening to your footsteps dying away in the distance—I always listen to them to catch the last

sound of you—I am stabbed with a fear that I have held you in my arms for the last time. But when we have been parted for days, and I am here waiting for you and thinking the moments endless until you come, and at last I hear your ring, I suddenly become like a freshman just up from school. [She laughs, smoothing his grey hair]. Yes: I know; but grey as I am, I am still a hobbledehoy: just a student waiting for his girl at the corner of the street where her shop is.

JITTA [moved] And do you think it is any different with me? All day I long to be with you, to say a thousand things to you! And when at last—[she finishes the sentence by a caress]! When you are away from me, I plod through my housework, and just count the days until—until this [she again presses him in her arms, and draws him down beside her on the couch].

BRUNO. If only I were young! Then I could really begin a new life with you instead of merely thinking and dreaming about it.

JITTA. I like it better as it is. I don't want to see you every day and become a commonplace with you, Bruno.

BRUNO. But are you content with these heartbreaking stolen hours? I'd risk you becoming a commonplace: I want you to be a commonplace for me; but I daresay I should bore you.

JITTA [sighing blissfully] The happiness of these stolen hours is so delicious that it makes up to me for everything I have to endure between times. And who knows what would happen if I were to break up your home and shatter your career? Are you sure we should not be too tired out, too broken—the effort, to enjoy our rest? One has to be young to do such things, Bruno: young enough to be able to forget.

BRUNO [sadly] You are right. Our love looks well only by candlelight. It won't stand daylight.

JITTA [refusing to be disengaged] Daylight is for your work, for your great book that is to be the crown of your career. But here in the candlelight you belong to me, and to me only.

BRUNO [quickly] Oh, not here alone. Do you think that my wife and my daughter put you quite out of my head when I

am at home? They ... do: you are everywhere. But what must it be for you? I often reproach myself—

JITTA [softly] You mustn't do that. I am not unhappy, Bruno. I was at first: I hardly dared go home and face Alfred's inquisitive eyes. But he saw nothing: his self-conceit is impenetrable. His cheerful grin killed my conscience. I hold up my head now everywhere: I am proud of belonging to you. When one is really happy, one is ruthless and shameless.

BRUNO. Jitta: do you know that you belonged to me before we ever saw one another?

JITTA. Yes. We were destined—

BRUNO. I don't mean that. I mean that we actually belonged to one another physically. I mean that my daughter—born before we knew one another—is your daughter.

JITTA. Edith! What do you mean, Bruno? You have the strangest fancies.

BRUNO. This is not a fancy, Jitta. It is a hard scientific fact: I worked out its theoretic possibility before Edith was born—before I ever set eyes on you. It strikes me dumb with wonder when I think how it has worked out between us. The daughter of my wife, my child and hers, not yours, resembles you, aye, loves you more than she loves her own mother, though she may not know it.

JITTA [thoughtfully] Strange. And I love your Edith as only a childless woman can love the child of the man she has interested and saved. I am not clever enough to share <sup>part</sup> of your science with you; but this I believe and accept. But how can such a miracle come about?

BRUNO [mystically] Men do not yet realize that no prophetic aspiration of theirs can fall utterly without fruit if its roots lie deep enough in their innermost conviction.

JITTA. Bruno: that must be right. It is an inspiration. It takes hold of my heart with both hands. You really are great.

BRUNO. Not at all: it is not new: everybody knows it nowadays in the rough. But it has never been worked out

scientifically far enough to explain this miracle of Edith and you. Well, I am working it out; and there is somebody else working at it with me.

JITTA [jealous] Somebody else!

BRUNO. You would never guess who.

JITTA. I do not want to guess. I do not care.

BRUNO. Think of the most hardened materialist you know: the very last man you could imagine lending himself to such a mystical speculation!

JITTA [relieved] Oh, a man! The most hopeless materialist I know is my husband; and I do not want to be reminded of him just now.

BRUNO. But it is your husband I mean. I have converted him.

JITTA. Oh, impossible. He would never believe a thing like that. Don't let Alfred deceive you, Bruno. He is only playing with your belief because he feels sure of discovering some grossly material explanation of it, and making you ridiculous. He does not believe it as you believe it.

BRUNO [brightly] I do not say he does: I do not say he can. Alfred is clever; but he is not me—or rather, not us two: two in one.

JITTA. Darling!

BRUNO. All the same, he is burning with ambition to have his name connected with a new departure in science. As he has failed to do it in physics he is willing to do it in psychology rather than not do it at all.

JITTA [scornfully] At your expense?

BRUNO. Not altogether, dearest. He really has given me some quite handy curve diagrams for my lectures. He knows everything: what he lacks is a sense of the significance of what he knows. I am really sorry for him, and should like to help him.

JITTA. You can help him without letting him rob you of your ideas.

BRUNO. It is not he who is robbing me of my ideas: it is I who am robbing him of his wife; and the less he is conscious

of his loss the meaner thief am I. I feel that through and through. [He kisses her hand passionately]. I have taken a priceless treasure from him. I must make amends somehow: I must pay my debt. That sense of obligation is in my very bones.

JITTA [looking hard at him] Why have I never felt this sense of obligation to your wife? Have I no conscience? or have you too much?

BRUNO. It is not the same. You do not feel that you have taken anything from Agnes: you feel that she has taken something from you.

JITTA. I know that I have a divine right to you. And I know that she has not.

BRUNO. There are other rights beside divine rights. If I had never come into your life, you would perhaps have come to some sort of understanding with Alfred; and he would have found some sort of happiness in possessing you.

JITTA. He has all the happiness he is capable of.

BRUNO. We have no right to say so. I have taken you from him.

JITTA. You have not taken me from him. I belonged to myself; and I gave you myself.

BRUNO. I have betrayed his trust.

JITTA. As I have betrayed your wife's trust.

BRUNO. That is quite different. Your relations with Agnes are mere society relations, conventional and superficial. But I am your husband's comrade: we were chums at school: we were at college together: we are professional colleagues. He knows me intimately; and if he were not such a confoundedly bad psychologist he would know that Nature meant you to be my wife. It is a stroke of luck for us that he knows nothing—if indeed it is only luck, and not his subconscious knowledge that he must not let himself know. Yes: he not only does not know: he will not know: he refuses to know. And that refusal, because it is unconscious, binds my sense of honor as if he spared us knowingly.

JITTA [changing her tone, and trying to soothe and coax him]

Darling: you are tormenting yourself for nothing. Let me see whether I can cure you of all these scruples and fancies. They are only spooks. [She draws him towards the bedroom]. Come.

BRUNO. No, not yet. [He gets away from her by standing up. She shrinks a little, wounded]. I am telling you this once for all; so that I may never have to speak of it again. God knows it is not to involve you in my struggles with myself, nor to whitewash myself, that I am spending our priceless moments like this. I am as impatient as you are: I long for you beyond all expression. But there is something you must do for me. Something you can understand only when you know the rights of it.

JITTA [repelled and anxious] But what is it?

BRUNO [pulling himself together] I want to speak to you about my book. I have something very important to say to you about it.

JITTA [a little disappointed] Bruno: can't that wait a little? You know how I value your work; but we have so little time left this evening—

BRUNO [resolutely] It is just because I have so little time left that I dare not put this off any longer. You know the value of my book. Well, you must take charge of it.

JITTA. You need not trouble about that, Bruno: it will make your name famous without my help.

BRUNO [looking hard at her, and forcing the emphasis of his words to the utmost] Not my name. His name.

JITTA. God of Heaven! whose name?

BRUNO. Your husband's.

JITTA [springing up] Alfred's!

BRUNO. Listen to me. The book is finished: the typed copy will be found in my desk. And the title-page reads "Fetters of the Feminine Psyche, by Professor Alfred Lenkheim."

JITTA. Bruno! You are mad.

BRUNO. I burnt the original manuscript yesterday: there is not a word of it in my handwriting left to prove that I

am the author. They will find a book by your husband among my things: that is all. [She is about to protest]. Promise me that you will leave this secret buried in my grave.

JITTA [beside herself] But why? Why? Why?

BRUNO [seizing her hands, but now pleading like a lover] It is my deepest wish. It is my most urgent prayer to you, Jitta.

JITTA [gasping] You ask me to do that! to promise you this unheard-of thing! This man who has no soul; who has been guilty of everything to me that a man can be guilty of to a woman except the infidelity that I would welcome with delight to excuse my own (he is not man enough for that): the fruit of your life's work is to drop into his mouth! And I am to be your accomplice in such a crime! No. I cannot. Never.

BRUNO [soothing her] I know how hard it is for you, darling. That is why I have not been able to bring myself to tell you until today. But I know you will not fail me.

JITTA. Don't say that, Bruno, as if it settled everything. I cannot act like a madwoman. Give me a reason.

BRUNO. I will. Listen. A book by a dead man is an orphan. Orphans sometimes die when they are not adopted. Mendel's masterpiece lay dead for thirty-five years while the fame of the living Darwin spread over the world. If Alfred adopts my orphan it will not perish; for Alfred's wife will adopt it too.

JITTA. Oh, Bruno, Bruno, how can you? That is so clever, so damnably clever. Has it come to mere cleverness between us?

BRUNO. I asked for a promise. You asked for a reason.

JITTA. But I am thinking of your fame—

BRUNO [snapping his fingers] Psha! That for my fame! What does it matter from whose hands the new generation will take the torch to carry on the great race of science? The truth will be as true with Alfred's name tacked on to it as Bruno's.

JITTA [*impatiently*] Oh yes, yes: I know all that. It sounds like a sentence from your annual address to your students. It's not true, Bruno: I feel it. It is not human. There is something else at the back of your mind.

BRUNO. No—except this. When I finally and irrevocably sealed my resolution yesterday by burning the manuscript, there came to me a moment of extraordinary exaltation in which I saw this sacrifice as my atonement to Alfred. It is the price at which I buy his wife from him; and now at last I can take my happiness with both hands, free in my conscience, right in my heart, in all honor as well as in all affection to the very end. [*He clasps her to his breast*].

JITTA [*still wondering at him*] You throw the greatest achievement of your life to him like a bone to a dog; and then feel you have made us two one. [*Breaking away from him*] No, no, Bruno: you are asking too much. You know that I love you as my man, without a thought of your greatness and your work; but all the same your work, your greatness, are a part of you; and I love every bit of you, your body, your soul, your reputation, your work, everything that would not exist if you did not exist. All that is my treasure and my pride. When you take a handful of it and throw it into the mud, you make me so much the poorer. Have you thought of that?

BRUNO. When two people stand to one another as we stand, the children born from their intercourse are not always children of flesh and blood, but inspirations, intuitions, convictions that they cannot discard without unfaithfulness. This is such an inspiration. Will you be unfaithful to it?

JITTA. Bruno: you want to play at Providence. Alfred is far too conceited to let anyone play Providence to him. If he refuses, what then?

BRUNO. He will not refuse. I have thought all that out. Why should he refuse to father a book which he already regards as half his own? He believes that I could never have written it without him. And you know how ambitious

he is. I can depend on Alfred absolutely. Can I depend on you?

JITTA [half broken] Who knows? I cannot depend on myself. This sacrifice is no child born of our intercourse, Bruno; you may be its father; but I am not its mother. I shall be its stepmother; and I shall hate it as no stepmother ever hated before. But the book is yours; and I have no rights over it: it must take the course you desire. I cannot go further than that. When you ask me to bind myself by a solemn vow, I—[shuddering] no, no: it is inhuman: a mockery, an impossibility.

BRUNO. I know I am putting your love to the cruellest test; but oh, Jitta, Jitta, do not fail me.

JITTA. So be it. [He snatches her hands and kisses them]. I promise you that if I survive the day that takes you from me, I will hide the truth as you demand, and take all the ghastly consequences just as you are mad enough to mean them. Are you satisfied now?

BRUNO [clasping her convulsively to him and hardly able to speak] I—I—thanks, thanks. My love.

JITTA [extricating herself quickly from his embrace] But if God wishes to be good to me he will never let me live to keep my promise.

BRUNO. I could not have pained you like this if I had the smallest doubt that I shall go first and go soon.

JITTA. Dont say that. Oh, do let us forget Death for one moment.

BRUNO. Death is nothing: if I could be sure that I should die tonight I should be unspeakably glad; for I should not have to strike you the bitterest blow of all.

JITTA. Bruno! Another blow!

BRUNO. Yes, another. My strength is going from me; and I need it all to force myself not to play the coward.

JITTA. How?

BRUNO. By leaving you today without daring to tell you that I do not intend to meet you again.

JITTA [struck to the heart] Not meet me again! Leave me!

BRUNO [with deliberate emphasis] This must be the last time. [Rising, with a sudden fanciful recklessness] Come: let it be the best. Let it be so full of happiness that we can say "It is enough: farewell."

JITTA. You are going to give me up! You can bring yourself to do that!

BRUNO. Nonsense! I shall never give you up. But it would be a crime to let you meet me here again at such a risk.

JITTA. How is the risk greater now than it has always been?

BRUNO. It was only a risk of being caught here with a live man. That was nothing: only a secret that three can keep. What about the risk of being found with a dead one?

JITTA [about to shriek]!

BRUNO [covering her mouth with his hand] Hush—sh! [She looks affrightedly at him: he looks gravely and significantly at her]. It is all up with me, dearest. I could not stop working; and my heart—

JITTA [with agonizing anxiety] Is it worse?

BRUNO [with a ghost of a laugh] Worse! It has gone all to pieces. I had no right to let you come this evening. I have put off telling you too long; but when I climbed those terrible stairs just now, I knew. You would have to give your name to the police. Our relations would be shouted through the streets and posted on the newspaper bills if you were found here with a—with a [he cannot say it, and indicates, by a gesture, the figure of a dead man lying on the floor].

JITTA [flinching at the image, but steadfast in her thoughts] Have no fear, Bruno. Why did you not tell me sooner what was troubling you? I could have relieved your mind. I have known all along that you were ill; and my only fear was that that [she repeats his gesture] might happen when you were alone instead of in my arms. Does that sound as if I cared what would become of me without you?

BRUNO. But I care, dearest. That is why I am resolved on our parting before this crazy tired old clock [he taps his left breast] runs down and stops ticking for good and all.

JITTA. Never. There is only one thing that can part me from you ; and that is not the stopping of the clock, but of your love for me. No other danger exists for me ; and no forethought of ours can protect us against that if it comes. [Abandoning herself to her passion] All the more reason why we must make the most of our love while it is within our reach. I love you : I love you : we are alive, not dead : you are living with my life as well as your own : your blood surges to mix with mine : you cannot die while I hold you fast. All the rest is an uneasy dream that means nothing : this is love ; and love is life made irresistible.

BRUNO [carried away] Life : yes : this is life, and this [he kisses her eyes], and this [he kisses her lips]. What a fool I was with my iron resolutions ! one throb of your breast, one touch of your lips ; and where are they ? Nothing matters but Jitta, Jitta, Jitta [he kisses her again and again]. I am neither weak nor afraid now ; and I promise you to live a hundred years.

JITTA. All the unhappinesses are forgotten : they never existed. [She turns him round and draws him towards the bedroom] Come.

BRUNO [beside himself] You trust me ; and I must betray you. You thought me a young man ; and I let you think so. But you shall not be deceived. You have made me as young as I seemed to you. [He seizes her round the hips, and lifts her up exultantly].

JITTA [terrified] Oh God, no : take care, Bruno : take care.

BRUNO [setting her down gaily] Bah ! Do I love you ?

JITTA. Yes, yes. You love me. I love you. Come.

BRUNO [pushing her towards the bedroom door] Quick, quick.

JITTA [running into the bedroom] Yes, yes, yes.

BRUNO [with a grim change of countenance] Poor Jitta ! That lift broke the mainspring. [He staggers against the door frame ; clutches at the wall to save himself ; strikes the electric light out by chance ; reels back into the middle of the room ; and drops dead].

JITTA [running in : she has begun to undress] What is the

matter? Where are you? [She stumbles against the body]. Oh God! [She switches on the light] Bruno. [She rushes to him and kneels by him]. Bruno: speak to me if you can: is it your heart again? What can I do for you? Shall I try to lift you?

She tries to raise him by his shoulders; but they are too heavy. She puts her hands round his neck and pulls it up from the floor; but the back of his head remains hanging and his jaw drops. With a gasp of horror she replaces the head and closes the open mouth. Then she scrambles to her feet and runs to the other door, calling breathlessly and voicelessly Mrs Billiter, Mrs Billiter. She opens the door, and regaining her voice, cries Mrs— She checks herself, suddenly remembering the consequences to herself of being found with the body. She closes the door quickly and noiselessly. She tries to think, her strained senses shewing in her eyes. Her fingers clutch for a moment at her half-naked breast as she thinks of her disordered appearance. She dashes into the bedroom, and reappears almost immediately with her blouse on, arranging it with nervous hands. She puts on her hat and mantle anyhow. As she turns to rush to the door the hat falls off. With a little cry of misery she takes the hat-pins from the hat and pins it properly to her hair; then looks at herself in the mirror and snakes her mantle straight. She turns, and is hurrying to the door when she finds the body in her way. A flush of remorse comes over her. She turns impulsively to the vase; takes out a handful of roses; and is stooping to lay them on his breast when she realizes that a man who drops dead cannot scatter flowers on himself. She shakes her head and puts the roses back; puts her hands distractedly to her head in an anguish of perplexity, feeling that she must not leave him without some ceremony of leave. There is only one thing that comes into her mind that will not compromise her. She goes to him, and cannot touch him or kiss him; but she makes the sign of the cross over him; kisses her hands; crosses herself; and hurries out, closing the door very softly behind her.

## ACT II

*A week has elapsed. Bruno is buried, and his death from natural causes duly certified. Jutta has taken refuge in an illness, and is keeping her bed. Her husband, Professor Alfred Lenkheim, is sitting in his study after lunch with young Dr Fessler, who is engaged to Bruno's daughter Edith. Alfred lacks the distinction and heroic touch of Bruno; but prosaic as he certainly is, he is saved from being common, if not from being a little comic, by the stamp put upon him as a man of learning by his university training and his professorial Chair. His age is between forty and fifty. Fessler is just an ordinary nice-looking young doctor.*

*The room has two doors: one, in the middle of the wall behind the two men, opening on the corridor; the other, on their left, leading to an inner room. The window faces the inner door from the opposite side; and there is a window-seat before it. At right angles to this window-seat, further up the room, is a sofa. There are two tables: one a writing-table on the side near the window, at which the professor is sitting, and the other a round table on the side near the inner door. There is a chair at it with its back to the wall in which the entrance door is, and another, in which Doctor Fessler is sitting, between it and the writing-table. The walls are crowded with book-shelves; and the writing-table is heaped with examination papers and manuscripts.*

LENKHEIM. Whats the matter? Going asleep at your age!  
You were not called up last night, were you?

FESSLER. No. But, by Jimminy, Lenkheim, I have gone through a lot this last week.

LENKHEIM. How?

FESSLER. Just consider. Imagine having to console Bruno's widow when I'm engaged to his daughter!

LENKHEIM. Why not?

FESSLER. Because they're at daggers drawn. Every word that soothes old Agnes is an outrage to Edith.

LENKHEIM. Why? What's wrong between them?

FESSLER. Oh, Mrs Haldenstedt is old-fashioned. She keeps up the convention that because Edith is a young unmarried woman she can't possibly understand about her father's death, and Edith has to pretend to be in the dark. But of course she knows as well as you or I; and it maddens her to have to hold her tongue and be treated like a child when all her feelings are boiling over about it. She was very fond of her father.

LENKHEIM. I knew the mother and daughter never got on very well together—jealousy, I suppose, as usual—but I thought this awful business would have brought them together.

FESSLER. Not a bit. It has set them more against one another than ever.

LENKHEIM. I suppose they've no notion who the woman was?

FESSLER. None. She will never be found out unless she comes forward herself.

LENKHEIM. She won't do that. Why should she give herself away?

FESSLER. Women do, sometimes, God knows why! But meanwhile, poor Mrs Haldenstedt is most frightfully cut up. There she is, distracted by all sorts of surmises and suspicions, not knowing what to think, asking herself every minute whether he went on the loose and died in a vulgar street adventure, or whether there was somebody all along whom she never suspected, making her marriage a mockery. We are all as much in the dark as she is; for there never

was a word against him: he seemed the correctest, most domesticated of men. That is, unless you know anything. You were so intimate with him, you know.

LENKHEIM. Was I really intimate with him? Certainly we were friends at college; and we kept it up afterwards. But he never told me much about himself.

FESSLER. He was not that sort of man. But he trusted nobody in the world as he trusted you: the widow is dead certain of that. By the way, she asked me to prepare you for a visit she is going to pay you.

LENKHEIM. Why should you prepare me?

FESSLER. Well, she is going to ask you to act as his scientific and literary executor.

LENKHEIM [*pleasantly surprised and suddenly self-conscious*] Really! Of course I shall be delighted. I may tell you that in my own will I made him my literary executor. Who would have thought that he would peg out first?

FESSLER. But didn't you know that he was ill?

LENKHEIM. Oh, I knew about his heart and so forth. But many a patient with heart disease lives to bury his doctor. As a matter of fact his case was not a very serious one. His heart would not have stood racing up two or three flights of stairs. But does any man of his age race upstairs? A very strong emotion or excitement might have killed him; but a settled married man with a wife and a grown-up daughter suffers more from too little excitement than from too much. What emotions has a domesticated man of science to fear after forty?

FESSLER. Then why did he die?

LENKHEIM. Just so: why did he die? He wouldn't have died if he had been leading the quiet life we all gave him credit for. What sort of life did he really lead? That is the question.

FESSLER. Isn't it shocking that such a man should die under such—such—well, such shady circumstances?

LENKHEIM. Shady! I should call them disgraceful. Yes, my dear boy, we must face it: he came to a disgraceful end.

An operatic tenor, or even a literary man, might be forgiven for dying in an adventure of that kind. But a man of science! Unfortunate, to say the least: most unfortunate.

FESSLER. At all events, since it was his luck to die in the dark, we are not called on to light the candle, are we?

LENKHEIM. We are not; but what about the police? And what about his wife?

FESSLER. They havnt the ghost of a clue.

LENKHEIM. It wont upset or delay your engagement, I hope. Not that I could blame you if you broke it off. Still—

FESSLER. I break it off! Good gracious, no!

LENKHEIM. I'm glad of that. Of course you must keep it up to Edith that there was nothing wrong.

FESSLER. But she wont have it that there was nothing wrong.

LENKHEIM. What!

FESSLER. You see, she adored her father. She sees him with a halo round his head; and nothing that he could do would be wrong for her. She has always felt that her mother could not live up to him; and she is persuading herself that this unknown woman was some wonderful person who made him as happy as she thinks he deserved to be.

LENKHEIM. Thats funny. Very funny. Does she suspect anybody?

FESSLER. I dont know. I cant see through her; and the worst of it is, she can see through me. She will find out what I think.

LENKHEIM. Which is?

FESSLER. Well, just what you think. And when she finds out what that is, heaven help me!

LENKHEIM. She wont find out. All that a young girl sees in a death is the romance of it: the vulgar reality does not exist for her. What an eye-opener for us who know better! [Sententiously] And yet, whatever view we may take of the affair, we must admit that these moral problems are very difficult: in fact, insoluble. Is there any man who can say

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that he has never been in a position in which sudden death would have been extremely embarrassing?

PESSLER. I suppose not. [Natively] By the way, that reminds me that I forgot to ask how Mrs Lenkheim is.

JITTA. Oh, Jitta is getting over it. She hopes to be about again for a couple of hours today. Just in a dressing-gown, you know, to sit about a bit.

PESSLER. Oh, good. Well, I must be off to the hospital. [He rises]. Tell her I asked after her.

LENKHEIM [rising] I will. How soon do you think I may expect the Haldenstedts?

PESSLER. Any time now, I should think. The old girl wont be easy until she has seen you.

Lenkheim goes out for a moment through the inner door. Jitta comes in, languid, and dressed as Lenkheim has described.

JITTA. Oh, so glad youve come, Doctor. [She shakes hands with Pessler]. Have you seen the Haldenstedts? I was so sorry not to be able to call on them. I have been really too ill. I hope they know that.

PESSLER [with affectionate deference] They thoroughly understand that. You must take the greatest care of yourself.

JITTA. You are not running away, are you?

PESSLER. I must. I have to be at the hospital; and I am late already.

JITTA. Come again soon, Doctor.

PESSLER. I hope to find you quite well then, dear lady.

He kisses her hand, and goes out. When he has gone, Lenkheim returns, full of excitement and curiosity.

LENKHEIM. Jitta: old Agnes is coming to see us. Bruno has made me his literary executor. That is what she is coming about.

JITTA. Has she recovered enough to bear discussing it with you?

LENKHEIM. She must. The world doesnt stand still when people die. I wonder what we shall find in his papers!

JITTA [going white] Has she found anything?

LENKHEIM. Yes: didnt I tell you? He has made me his scientific and literary executor.

JITTA. I mean about—about—

LENKHEIM. About his death? Absolutely nothing: Fessler has just told me so.

JITTA [sitting down at the table, reassured] Poor Fessler!

LENKHEIM [resuming his seat at his writing-table] Yes, poor chap: he is rather in a fright about Edith.

JITTA. Why?

LENKHEIM. He is afraid that her grief for her father will kill her feeling for him; so youd better take Edith in hand you know how she clings to you. She is like her father in that: he clung to you.

JITTA. To me!

LENKHEIM. Yes: you know very well he did. If I had died you would have been up before this, I expect.

JITTA. Alfred: if you begin nagging I shall have to go back to bed.

LENKHEIM. Who's nagging? [She rises. He jumps up apprehensively]. There now: for God's sake dont make a scene about nothing. All I meant was that if he ever told anything to anybody he would have told it to you. [She sits down again]. Jitta: have you really no suspicion?

JITTA. Of what?

LENKHEIM. Who the woman was.

JITTA. How could he tell anyone who she was? It would have been dishonorable to betray her.

LENKHEIM. Men do tell, all the same. They dont tell the newspapers; but they tell other women.

JITTA. I object to be classed with "other women."

LENKHEIM. Oh well, it's no use talking to you if you will be so touchy. I didnt suggest that he told you: you brought that in yourself. All that was in my mind was that as you were so much in and out of his house you must have met her one time or another if she was the wife of any of his friends. It usually is a friend's wife.

JITTA [with affected listlessness] Is it?

LENKHEIM. Well, it stands to reason, doesn't it? Unless it's a chance woman from the streets.

JITTA [wincing] I suppose so.

LENKHEIM. Did he never talk to you about love, or anything of that sort?

JITTA. The last time we were at the theatre he discussed the play with me. It was a play about love.

LENKHEIM. Well, what else would a play be about? That's no clue. I wonder was she a patient of his?

JITTA. Does it matter? Need we gossip about it?

LENKHEIM [impatiently] Don't be so superior. I like gossip. Everybody likes gossip. You like it yourself as well as anybody. If she was a patient that would account for his being so reserved about her.

JITTA. Alfred: you are unbearable. I will go back to bed.

*She rises and makes for the door, but is checked by the entrance of Agnes Haldenstedt and her daughter, both in deep mourning. Agnes carries a small dispatch case. She is not really much older than Jitta; but she has retired so completely from the competition of women in attractiveness, and accepted so fully her lot as a good bourgeoisie with a home to keep and a family to manage on a slender income that she is set down as much older and less distinguished socially. Her sense of duty has kept her upright; and her uprightness has given her a certain authority, as of a person of some consequence. She has been deeply wounded by the circumstances of her husband's death, and is stiff and suspicious in her manner.*

*Her daughter is young and ingenuous, with a strong character. A passion of grief for her father has set her on fire with pride and a sense of being ready for any sacrifice.*

The conversation which ensues is solemn, artificial, and constrained. They condole with one another in low tones and unnaturally bookish sentences. Jitta has to draw the girl to her, and kiss her on the brow. Alfred leads Mrs Haldenstedt to the sofa. When she sits down, he sits on the window-seat near her. Jitta leads Edith to the chair she has just vacated, and goes to the sofa, where she seats herself on the widow's left.

*All these movements are ridiculous; yet the mourning worn*

by the two visitors makes them seem, if not natural, at least becoming.

LENKHEIM [in hollow tones] May I say again, dear Mrs Haldenstedt, how deeply I—

JITTA [gushing] At last, dearest Mrs Haldenstedt, I am able to tell you what I felt when I lay helpless, unable to pay the last respects to our dear lost friend. [As she sits down, she seizes the hands of Mrs Haldenstedt, giving her no opportunity of refusing the attention]. But in my sick room I was with you in spirit. Indeed I have never been closer to you and poor Edith than in that moment when I had to ask my husband to tell you what it cost me to stay away.

AGNES [not at all disposed to allow Jitta so prominent a share in her grief, but conventionally resorting to her handkerchief] Thank you. I'm sure it's very kind of you.

LENKHEIM [clearing his throat and sniffing] Under such a sudden blow, what can we say? We are all struck dumb. We all share your grief.

AGNES. When people are sick, and we can sacrifice ourselves completely to the duty of nursing them: when they can lean on us to the very last, then, when the parting comes, there is some consolation in the thought that we have done all in our power. But an end like this, so sudden, so dreadful—[she breaks down].

LENKHEIM [making the best of it] Still, I am not sure that a lingering death really spares the feelings of the survivors. Death often tortures its victims before it strikes the final blow. In your case, dear Mrs Haldenstedt, there was at least no torture.

AGNES [staring at him] No torture! What has the future for me but the torture of a widow's grief?

EDITH [unsympathetic] It has the honor of father's name. Is that nothing?

LENKHEIM [effusively] Which I will help you both to uphold, my dear Edith, believe me.

AGNES. He knew he could depend on you. I have a packet of papers marked "Professor Lenkheim's property:

to be given into his own hands": that is why I have come today instead of waiting for Mrs Lenkheim to call.

LENKHEIM. Dear fellow: how conscientious of him! such papers as he had of mine were of no consequence. Shall we have a little quiet talk all to ourselves, in here? [He rises and crosses the room, inviting her, by a gesture, to come with him through the door opposite the window].

AGNES [pausing between Jitta and Edith] I wanted to come alone; but Edith insisted on coming with me.

LENKHEIM. She was quite right. She is now your only support.

EDITH [proudly] Thank you, Professor. I wish you could persuade my mother that I could do much more for her if she would tell me all her troubles. I am no longer a child. There is nothing now that cannot be spoken of quite frankly before me.

AGNES [with a weary smile] Of course not, dear. But there are things it is better not to know. I know them; and I only wish I could change places with you.

Emphasizing this with an emphatic nod at Edith, she goes into the next room. Lenkheim follows her.

JITTA [throwing off her false manner, whilst retaining the patronizing courtesy of an older woman to a younger one, holds out her hands to Edith with genuine sympathy] Come, darling. [Edith comes to her and takes her hands]. Sit here, close to me. [She makes room for her on the sofa beside her. Edith sits down on her left, and looks gratefully and longingly into her eyes]. Do you remember when we were last here together? Your father brought you. He was radiant with joy and pride in you. We were all so happy.

EDITH [thoughtfully] How long was that ago?

JITTA. Barely three weeks.

EDITH. It seems an age. I was a child then. I can hardly remember how I felt. It is as if I had been asleep.

JITTA. Your father's death has awakened you: you are looking at life for the first time.

EDITH. I have been looking at death for the first time.

JITTA. My poor child! But dont lose courage. Life lies before you: it will make up to you for many sorrows. You will get over it, Edith.

EDITH. Why should I get over it? I dont want to get over it. Do you suppose I feel disgraced?

JITTA. Oh no, no: of course not. But such a grief as this always makes us feel that we have come to the end of everything: that nothing can ever be the same again. Yet next day we find ourselves at the beginning of everything instead.

EDITH [*impatient*] You need not speak to me like that. You know very well that what is the matter is not merely the loss of a father: a thing that happens to everybody sooner or later.

JITTA [*taken aback*] Edith, dear—

EDITH [*downright and indignant*] Why do you treat me as if I were a little girl, as my mother does? I did not expect it from you. Oh, I am so tired of all this humbug I turned to you because I hoped you would understand me, and let me open my heart to you like a friend

JITTA. My dear: I will be an elder sister to you—

EDITH [*fiercely*] I said a friend.

JITTA [*surrendering*] Oh, you are terrible. I will be everything you want, if I can. But why are you angry with me? I really meant what I said. Life has a great deal to offer you: dont forget that you are going to be married. I believe you can trust your man. He adored your father. He will regard you as a sacred legacy.

EDITH. Thats curious. He used that word himself the day we buried poor papa. But I dont intend to be taken as a legacy, sacred or not.

JITTA. Edith: he feels your loss as deeply as you do yourself. Some of us perhaps feel it more deeply, because we have more experience of men, and know how much better what he was than you are yet old enough to know.

EDITH [*rising and pacing restlessly across the room*] Oh, these commonplaces! How you keep throwing them at me!

None of us know what my father was. he was thrown away among us. [Turning on Jitta] Why did he not die with us? Why had he no last word for us? I was nothing to him: none of us were anything to him.

JITTA. You know, dear, that you are unjust to him when you say so.

EDITH. Unjust! unjust! what has that to do with it? Why did he not come to us for help, for nursing, for care?

JITTA. He was too considerate to let you know how ill he was.

EDITH. He told everyone else. We were left in the dark.

JITTA. No, no. No one knew it except himself.

EDITH [passionately] My mother wont speak to me about it; but I know very well what she is thinking. They whisper all day at home. I see it in the eyes of the visitors; and it makes me furious. I never want to see anyone cry again as my mother cried that night when they brought him home. It wasnt only grief: there was a bitterness in her that had nothing to do with grief or love. I have often felt in my soul that papa never found in his home what he needed and longed for. There were moments when I somehow got beyond myself and became another person: perhaps the woman I am growing into; and he was so responsive to that flash of something different in me, so grateful for it, that I saw quite plainly how he was longing for something else, something more, than we were giving him. We were not good enough for him. [She throws herself into the chair beside the round table, sobbing].

JITTA [rising and going to her] Dearest: dont cry like that.

EDITH. It nearly killed me to see him sitting there, as he often did, staring right through me without seeing me, and sighing as he drew his hand across his eyes and through his hair.

JITTA. Dear child: you must not worry yourself because he sometimes looked straight at you and did not see you. Just think. He was a doctor: he knew his danger better than anyone. When a man finds himself condemned to death,

his thoughts and feelings must be overwhelming. Well, you were looking at the sea in a storm or at the heaven opening above it, would you see a tiny figure on the shore even if it were your own child?

EDITH [rising in a girlish rapture] Thank you for that: it is beautiful, and quite true. [She closes her eyes, silent for a moment, and a little breathless. Jitta smiles, and sits down in the writing-table chair]. And now, wont you help me to find out the secret of his death?

JITTA. What secret?

EDITH. Who is the woman in whose arms my father died?

JITTA [startled] So that is what you think! Poor child!

EDITH [angry] I do not think it: I know it. You know it. Please let us have no more of the poor child business: it does not impose on me. How am I to find her?

JITTA [remonstrating] Edith, Edith, what could you say to her, even if you found her?

EDITH. Only that I love her.

JITTA. Love her! What for?

EDITH. For making my father happy. [Restless again, pacing up and down]. Oh, if you knew how infamously all those people who call on us misunderstand him. They insult my mother by condoling with her on her husband's unfaithfulness. They insult God by declaring that my father threw himself into the gutter, and was justly punished for it.

JITTA [springing up] What! They dare say such brutal things!

EDITH. Oh, not in those words: they are too polite to speak as horribly as they think; but I know. And my mother encourages them. She actually likes to feel that some unheard-of disgrace has fallen on her. She thinks it makes her interesting and revenges her. She positively wallows in it.

JITTA [shocked] Edith!

EDITH. Oh, it is the right word for it: why should I not use it? She never thinks of his sorrows: only of her own.

JITTA [taking her arm persuasively] My dear: you mustn't go on like this. Come: let me talk to you quietly. [She

*draws her back to the sofa, and makes her sit down again]. If you loved your mother as you loved your father, you would be kinder to her. You think of him as a man whose wife has failed him. Dont forget that she is a woman whose husband failed her.*

EDITH. How did he fail her? If she had been worthy of him—

JITTA. Yes, yes, dear; but she was not worthy of him. Or stop: no: we have no right to say that.

EDITH. We have a right to say that she was not the right woman for him.

JITTA. Yes; but dont forget that that means that he was not the right man for her. He was her superior if you like; but that only made it worse for her? His superiority must often have wounded her self-respect; and as any weakness of his flattered it, she perhaps likes to think that he was not quite perfect, and even that he treated her badly.

EDITH. You think that an excuse for her! I call it abominable.

JITTA. Dont be impossible, dear. Abominable or not, it explains her readiness to believe the worst. You must not blame her because your faith in him is greater, and your consolation nobler. Remember: he did not betray you as he betrayed her. For he did betray her; and so did that woman. Tell yourself that, Edith, whenever you feel tempted to hate your mother. Promise me you will.

EDITH. I will never tell myself such a silly lie. I will take my father's memory and good name out of my mother's hands, and out of the hands of her tittle-tattling friends. I will make the world see him as he was, and as I loved him, not as she sees him, and as she hates him.

JITTA. The world will see him with its own eyes, dear, not with yours. All you can do is to save his memory from being blackened by that odious thing, a family quarrel. Come! promise me to stop worrying about your mother?

EDITH. I am not worrying about her: I am worrying about the woman my father loved. I cannot help it: she is always

in my mind. Why was she not with him when they found him? Why did she run away like a criminal?

JITTA. Perhaps she is asking herself those questions every day in her shame and misery. Oh, Edith, we don't know what meannesses we are capable of until we are tried. The dread of a public scandal—of having to face a policeman prying into the most sacred and secret places in her soul—will drive a woman to anything. Remember: she had not only to save herself from the scandal, but his memory as well.

EDITH. No, no, no. She did not save him. She left him under the stigma of having died in the arms of some vile creature. I know in my soul that she was not that. The world would forgive him if it knew that she is what I know she must be if he loved her. Oh, why does she not defy all the silly world for his sake, and say "It was I."

JITTA. You ask too much from her. She may have been capable of great things when he was alive and at her side. What is the poor wretch now but a broken-hearted lonely coward?

EDITH. She is not broken-hearted: my father never broke any woman's heart. I loved him; and that makes even his death a glory to me. If she is lonely why does she not come to me? She shall come to me. We shall cure one another's loneliness, we two. Where is she to cry her heart out if not in my arms?

JITTA. No: she slunk away into the darkness. Let her be. She can bleed to death in her hiding-place.

EDITH. She shall not: she will be drawn to me: you will see. Remember that I have no longer any place at home. I cannot live with people who cannot feel about my father as I do; and there is only one such person in the world.

JITTA. That woman?

EDITH. Yes. I will give her every right over me that the woman who returned my father's love should have over his daughter: the right I deny to my mother. I swear it.

JITTA. How serious you are, Edith! But what will your mother say, and the man you are engaged to?

EDITH. My mother would never understand: I take nothing from her that she is capable of missing. As to the man who says he loves me, and asks me to share my whole life with him, if he cannot understand me and support me in this he will never have me for a wife. I can do without any man if I can find the woman to whom I am bound for ever and ever. You will help me to find her, will you not?

JITTA [deeply moved, drawing Edith to her] Oh, darling, darling, if only I could! If only I dared!

Lenkheim throws the door open: he is returning with Agnes. Jitta and Edith move asunder and rise hastily. Agnes comes in, drying her eyes with her handkerchief. Lenkheim follows her solemnly with her dispatch case in his hand.

EDITH [stamping] Oh, bother! Always at the wrong moment. Always spoiling everything. [She turns impatiently to the window, and stands with her back to them, fuming].

AGNES [to Alfred] Thank God I found strength for this. It is a great relief to me. But I am dead tired: I must go home. [To Edith] Come, child.

JITTA. Wont you sit down and rest for a moment?

AGNES. Thank you; but I shall be better at home. And I have so many accounts to settle.

LENKHEIM. Ah, yes, yes: of course you have. Well, if you must go, you must. And you may depend on me not to keep you waiting too long before I go to work on the scientific papers.

JITTA. I hope to be allowed to go out again in a day or two. May I come to see you if the doctor says I may?

AGNES. Do, of course. I shall expect you. [To Lenkheim] You will forgive me, wont you, all the trouble I am giving you? It has done me so much good to unburden myself to a real friend.

LENKHEIM. You have had a cruel experience, dear Mrs Haldenstedt; but we must all resign ourselves to our trials.

AGNES. Yes: I suppose that is a great consolation.

EDITH. My consolation is that nobody dares console me.

ALFRED [pompously] Proud words; and how true! how

true! [Unctuously, as he shakes her hand] Goodbye, dear lady, good-bye.

AGNES. Goodbye. [To Edith, laughing a little maliciously] Since you are so strong, child, just give me your arm.

JITTA [shaking hands] Goodbye.

Edith goes out with her mother leaning heavily on her. Jitta goes out with them.

LENKHEIM [relieved at being rid of the widow] Ouf! [He carries the dispatch case to his writing-table, and sits down to examine its contents. He is in no hurry. It contains nothing but the manuscript of a biggish book. He leans lazily back with his legs stretched, and turns over the cover without looking at it. He reads a bit, and makes a wry face. He disagrees intensely and contemptuously with every passage he reads, abandoning each with sniffs and pishes, only to be still more disgusted with the next.

Jitta returns; sees what he is doing; and halts between him and the round table, silently watching him.

Finally he gives the book up as hopeless; shuts up the pages, and stares at the mass of manuscript as if wondering what he is to do with such trash. Suddenly his expression changes. His eyes bulge in amazement.

ALFRED [after a stifled exclamation] Jitta! Jitta! [He turns, half rising, and sees her]. Oh, you're there.

JITTA. What is the matter? [knowing only too well, and very angry at his contemptuous air, but pretending to be listless and languid].

LENKHEIM [stewing her the manuscript] Look at this!

JITTA. Well?

LENKHEIM. Look at the title.

JITTA [reading] "Fetters of the Feminine Psyche." Is that the book you worked on with him?

LENKHEIM. I! Certainly not: he wrote it all himself. I only gave him his facts. Read the next line.

JITTA [reading] "By Alfred Lenkheim." I suppose he meant you to finish it.

LENKHEIM [turning over to the end] But it is finished. Look. Was he mad? Did he suppose I would condescend to put

my name to another man's work? I have some reputation of my own to fall back on, thank God. There is something behind this.

JITTA. I suppose he wished to leave you something valuable as a keepsake. You were his friend.

LENKHEIM [scornfully] A keepsake! Don't talk nonsense, Jitta: a man does not give away his biggest work as if it were his diamond pin, unless he is afraid to put his own name to it. But if he thinks he is going to put mine to his trash he is greatly mistaken.

JITTA [boiling with rage, pointing to the manuscript] He has sacrificed his immortality for your benefit.

LENKHEIM [angrily] Rot. Why should he? Nobody who can create sacrifices his creation. [He throws the manuscript on the table]. Not that he ever pretended to think much of the book.

JITTA [indignantly] He thought the world of it. It was his greatest pride.

LENKHEIM [turning on her, a suspicion flashing on him] How do you know?

JITTA [checking herself, feeling that her temper has betrayed her] He often spoke to me about this book, and about the hopes he had built on it.

LENKHEIM. To you! What do you know about psychiatry? Why should he sacrifice his reputation to add to mine? quite unnecessarily.

JITTA. The whim of an invalid, I suppose.

LENKHEIM [out of patience] Whim! He throws away his one chance of notoriety; and you call that a whim. Do you take me for a fool?

JITTA. Dont shout, Alfred, please.

ALFRED [subsiding a little] I'm not shouting: I'm asking you to talk sense. You say he spoke to you about this. What did he tell you?

JITTA. Of course I knew too little of the work you and he were doing together to be able to help or understand much. [Decisively] But in any case you must carry out his wishes.

LENKHEIM. What wishes?

JITTA. You must accept what he has left you.

LENKHEIM. Why must I?

JITTA. It was his last wish. we have no choice.

LENKHEIM. We! Me, you mean. What have you to do with it?

JITTA. Well, you if you like.

LENKHEIM. It's not me you're thinking of. Funny, the way women run after a dead man if only he dies romantically! Anyhow this thing is impossible. I won't do it.

JITTA. Why?

LENKHEIM. Because it would be nothing short of swindling the scientific world to pass off his stuff on it as mine: that's why. And now, what the deuce am I to say to old Agnes? [Grumbling] Such an unreasonable thing to ask me to do! Such an ungrateful thing!

JITTA. Was it ungrateful to give you the whole credit when you were only his collaborator?

LENKHEIM. Collaborator! What are you talking about? He knew as well as I did that I was only waiting for the publication of his idiotic theory to tear it to pieces. You don't suppose I believe in it, do you?

JITTA. Then perhaps that was what he wanted to prevent.

LENKHEIM. Jitta: you are simply drivelling. Bruno was too jolly conceited to be afraid of me. Don't be childish.

JITTA [irritably] I am like yourself: I am only trying to guess why he did it.

LENKHEIM. Just so. Why did he do it? Where is the sense in it? I believe you know, Jitta.

JITTA. Really, Alfred—! I must go back to bed.

LENKHEIM. You haven't been up an hour.

JITTA. But I am dead tired.

LENKHEIM. You can't be as tired as all that. What do you want to run away for?

JITTA. Have you forgotten that I am ill? I can hardly stand. I must lie down.



ALFRED. Well, lie on the sofa.

JITTA. Don't be brutal, Alfred.

LENKHEIM. Bosh! You are hiding something from me: I haven't experimented with psycho-analysis for nothing. I notice that this crazy thing that bothers me doesn't bother you. You understand it: you couldn't take it so quietly if you didn't.

JITTA. I take it without shouting, if that is what you mean.

LENKHEIM. What did he say to you about the book and about his hopes? Why did you never say a word about them to me?

JITTA. I never thought about it.

LENKHEIM. If you had never thought about it you would have talked to me about it.

JITTA. I suppose I did not think it worth mentioning.

LENKHEIM. Psha! Would a man who told you all that not tell you plenty of other things? That love affair, now—?

JITTA [shrinking] Oh, Alfred!

LENKHEIM. Oh, stuff! Who was the woman? You know all about her: I can see it in your eyes. [He takes her by the shoulders and turns her face to face]. Aha! You know who she was. You know all about it.

JITTA [rising indignantly and letting herself go] You are mad, and grossly rude.

LENKHEIM [rising also] I have had enough of being humbugged. Who was she?

JITTA [closes her lips obstinately]!

LENKHEIM. Was he so much to you that you will not give the other woman away, even to me, your husband? Were those his orders?

JITTA [exhausted] I have no orders. I go my own way [she attempts to leave the room].

LENKHEIM [intercepting her] You shan't run away. If you don't tell me who she is, I will—I will—[he makes a threatening gesture, not very convincingly].

JITTA. Take care, Alfred. Your cunning is only a fool's

cunning after all. The answer to your question is staring you in the face. Thank your stars you are too stupid to see it.

LENKHEIM. Am I? We shall see. Before you leave this room I will find out the part you have played in this dirty business.

JITTA [*starting as from the lash of a whip*] Dirty! Oh, never was anything purer, holier, nobler.

LENKHEIM [*screaming*] Ah! It was you! There was no other woman: it was you, you. He bought you from me, for that [*he hangs his fist on the manuscript*]. The damned thief! [*He collapses into his chair at the table, clasping his head in his hands*].

JITTA [*sitting down wearily on the sofa*] Leave the dead in peace. If you cannot hold your tongue, abuse me. I am alive, and can feel it.

LENKHEIM [*miserably*] You dont even deny it!

JITTA. No. Are you surprised? You lost me long ago.

LENKHEIM. My fault, of course. You worthless devil: what do you expect me to think of you?

JITTA. You can think what you like, Alfred. I dont grudge you that melancholy satisfaction.

LENKHEIM. Have you no conscience, no shame?

JITTA. Do you want me to make a scene for you, Alfred? I am sorry: I am too tired.

LENKHEIM. If I had him here—

JITTA. Threaten him to your heart's content. He is dead.

ALFRED. Yes; but I am very much alive. Dont forget that.

JITTA. Not so very much alive, Alfred.

ALFRED. Yah [*gnashes his teeth with rage*]!

JITTA. However, what I enjoyed I shall have to pay for. I know that.

LENKHEIM. You and he were lovers?

JITTA [*proudly*] Yes: you have found the right word at last. Lovers.

LENKHEIM [*whining pitifully*] And you could live in the

house with me, and take my care and my nursing and my money, and even— [He looks at her and chokes]. How long has this affair been going on?

JITTA. Our love has lasted three years.

LENKHEIM. Love! Love in the sort of house he was found dead in!

JITTA. Love wherever we were. And wherever we were was paradise. Does that give you any idea of his greatness?

LENKHEIM. Of your meanness, more likely. Dont try to stuff me with big words: they only shew that you wont confess your caddishness even to yourself.

JITTA [rising] Oh, please! I cut a pretty contemptible figure—

LENKHEIM [triumphing] You do. You do.

JITTA [continuing]—beside him.

LENKHEIM [rising, goaded beyond endurance: threatening her] You take care, do you hear?

JITTA [wringing her hands] My place was at his side. They should have had to tear me away from him by force. Yes; and I will tell you something more. The last beat of his heart would have broken mine if I had been any good. But I am no good; and here I am, as you see me. Oh, you are quite right. I have no right to be in any decent house [she turns to the door].

LENKHEIM. Stop: where are you going?

JITTA. I dont know. Into the streets, I suppose.

LENKHEIM. Oh, damn your heroics! You shant leave this room until you have told me everything.

JITTA [bitterly] Dont you know enough already?

LENKHEIM [pointing to the manuscript] What does that title-page mean?

JITTA. You know. You have said what it means.

LENKHEIM. I want to know what he said.

JITTA. That you are to be the father to his orphaned book. That the fame it will bring you will make amends to you—for me.

LENKHEIM. The blackguard! Not content with stealing

you from me, he must dictate the rest of my life to me, as if I were a child.

JITTA. Yes: compared to him you are a child. He has provided for you.

LENKHEIM. Ha! And were you equally kind and thoughtful for his wife, eh?

JITTA [earnestly] Alfred: it was too strong for us.

LENKHEIM. What was too strong for you?

JITTA. Love. You don't understand love. Have you anything else to say to me?

LENKHEIM. No. [He turns his back on her, and goes sulkily to the window].

JITTA. Goodbye. [She tries to go, but suddenly becomes weak, and reels against the head of the sofa]. Alfred.

LENKHEIM. What's the matter? [He runs to her; and gets her safely seated].

JITTA. Don't mind, Alfred. I shall be better soon: it is passing.

LENKHEIM [turning brusquely from her like an angry child] I am not sympathizing with you. It serves you right. [He sits down at the round table, with his elbows on it, muttering and sulking]. Treated me disgracefully. Disgracefully.

JITTA [sighs wearily] !!

LENKHEIM [unaggressively] Jitta?

Her name and the change in his tone give her a shock. She turns and looks searchingly at him.

LENKHEIM [recovering his self-control by a rather broken effort]. This is no use. I have come to my senses. I—I will take it quietly and reasonably.

JITTA. I am glad you can: I wish I could.

LENKHEIM [shaking his head] But we can't leave it like this, can we?

JITTA. What can we do, Alfred?

LENKHEIM. You have done me harm enough. Do you want to ruin me as well?

JITTA. It is I who am ruined, as you call it, is it not? The sin is mine: I will pay the penalty by myself. Your

Life is only beginning: with that book you have a future. I have only a past. I will take it and myself out of your life. [She rises].

LENKHEIM [out of patience, jumping up] Look here: since you wont talk sense and be commonly civil to me, I'm going to assert myself. You cant settle an affair like this by looking like a martyr and walking out into the street. You must learn to consider other people a little. If you have no regard for me, at least remember that Agnes and Edith have a future, and have a right not to have it spoiled. For their sake I am prepared to endure your presence in my house.

JITTA [with faint surprise and some irony] You can bring yourself to that? You can still bear to look at me?

LENKHEIM. Make no mistake: all is over between you and me. For ever. I mean it.

JITTA. So do I.

LENKHEIM. Very well: be it so. But that does not mean that we need separate. People can live miles apart under the same roof. That is how you will have to live with me. If you have a spark of decent feeling left, you will not force a public scandal on me.

JITTA. Does it matter?

LENKHEIM. Does it matter! Are you utterly selfish? Dont you understand that if this miserable break-up of our marriage becomes known it will break up that poor woman's widowhood as well?

JITTA. Does she matter so much?

LENKHEIM [playing his ace] Well, what about Edith? Doesn't she matter? Do you suppose Fessler can afford to marry her if you drag her family through the mud?

JITTA [staggered] Oh! I was not thinking, Alfred. Give me until tomorrow to think it over. I can bear no more today. I can hardly stand.

LENKHEIM. You can stand as well as I can. [She immediately sits down obstinately at the writing-table]. Very well; but stand or sit, you dont leave this room until you give me your word to stay.

JITTA. With you?

LENKHEIM. Yes, with me. It is I who will have to pay the housekeeping bills. But dont be afraid: I am done with you, except before company. Not one word will I ever speak to you again when we are alone together.

JITTA. Oh, Alfred, you will tell me so ten times a day. Dont let us talk nonsense.

LENKHEIM. You will see. Not one word. Not a sound. I tell you I am done with you; and I wish I had never met you.

JITTA. It sounds too good to be true, Alfred.

LENKHEIM. Psha!

JITTA. But that part of it rests with yourself. [Determinedly] And now for my conditions.

LENKHEIM. Your conditions! Yours!!! You dare talk to me of conditions!

JITTA. You are in my hands, Alfred; and you know it. I can give the whole scandal away if you defy me. I will not be unkind; but if I am to keep up appearances, you must keep them up too. If I am to pretend to be a good woman, you must pretend to be a great man.

LENKHEIM. Pretend!

JITTA. Oh, be a great man by all means, Alfred, if you can. But you must pretend in any case.

LENKHEIM. How?

JITTA. You will pretend to be the author of that great book. That will be your share of the sham of our life together.

LENKHEIM. But I tell you I dont believe a word of the silly thing.

JITTA. Of course not. If you had the genius to believe it, you would have had the genius to write it.

LENKHEIM [goaded] I—

JITTA [continuing calmly] You cannot believe it, just as I cannot believe that you will never speak to me again;—

LENKHEIM. I never will.

JITTA [still ignoring his protest]—but you will come to



believe every word of the silly thing, as you call it, when it makes Lenkheim as famous as Einstein.

LENKHEIM [startled by the name] Einstein! You are tempting me, you devil.

JITTA. You envied Einstein, Alfred. Well, all that you envied him for is within your reach. Stretch out your hand, and take it.

LENKHEIM. And you envied Einstein's wife, did you? I see. Why could not your stupid husband give you a triumphant tour through Europe? Why should you not shake hands with all the kings, and dine with all the presidents, and have gala nights at the Opera? To get all that you will be my accomplice in a fraud, eh? Since you cannot have a good time with him you will have one with me.

JITTA [round-eyed for a moment at this new light on her conduct] How clever of you, Alfred! You have found a reason you can really believe in. I should never have thought of it; but you are welcome to it if only you will father his book.

LENKHEIM [desperately perplexed: yielding] But, Jitta: I don't really believe that. It's not like you: you are not clever enough, not ambitious enough. What is your real reason?

JITTA [decisively] He wished it: that is enough for me. He knew better than either of us what is best for us.

LENKHEIM. Did he indeed, confound him!

JITTA. He did indeed, Alfred; and I forbid you to confound him.

LENKHEIM. Well, if I do—and mind: I don't say I will—I—

JITTA. Yes?

LENKHEIM. I will think it over.

JITTA. Just so, Alfred. Goodnight. [She goes out, tranquilly convinced that she will have her own way].

LENKHEIM [rushing to the door in a last effort to assert himself, and shouting after her] If you think— [He peters out;

*strips his hands desperately into his pockets like a cleaned-out gambler; trots back irresolutely to his writing-table; takes up the MS.; stares at it for a moment; and reads slowly] "By Professor Alfred Lenkheim, Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Vienna." Well, I'm dashed!*



## ACT III

*Mrs Haldenstedt is in her sitting-room with Alfred and Fessler, all three very busy going through the papers of her late husband. She is feverishly reading letters, and tearing them up and throwing them into the waste-paper basket as they prove one after another to be of no interest. Her sighs and exclamations of disappointment and impatience are getting on the nerves of Alfred, who is trying to read a manuscript. He flinches at the sharp sounds made by her violent tearing of the letters. Fessler, who is sorting some papers which he has already gone through, is sympathetic, and looks pitifully at the window from time to time.*

The room is lighted by a large bay window, with a window-seat under it. The table heaped with papers is in this bay; and Mrs Haldenstedt sits at the head of it with her back to the light, and Alfred and Fessler at the sides of it to her right and left respectively. The corner of the room behind them on their right is cut off by a double door leading to the study. Another door leading to the corridor of the flat is in the diagonally opposite corner, and is consequently before them on their left. On their right between the window and the study door, a console stands against the wall, with flowers on it, and above it a convex mirror. On the same side of the room, a couch.

LENKREIM [unable to bear the noise any longer] Do you mind my taking these manuscripts into the study and examining them there? They require a certain degree of quiet concentration.

FESSLER. Well, not exactly Einstein, perhaps. But— [he stops].

AGNES. But what? Suppose he had left you a safe full of diamonds, and when you opened the safe it was empty!

FESSLER. Oh, you exaggerate!

AGNES [rising, out of patience] Doctor Fessler: if you can take neither me nor my husband's affairs seriously, I think you had better leave both alone.

FESSLER [rising, greatly surprised] Have I offended you?

AGNES [disarmed by his naive sincerity] No, no. Never mind. Never mind. You are too young. You are not used to women. [Sitting down again] Sit down, wont you? I will talk to Professor Lenkheim about it. He will understand.

FESSLER [standing stiffly, being now really offended] By all means, Mrs Haldenstedt, though I really do not see what he can say more than I can.

AGNES. There! You are offended. But if you had been neglected as I have been for months past, while my husband spent hours and hours and hours in his study, writing, writing, writing, using up paper until it cost as much as the butter and eggs, you would want to know what had become of it all.

FESSLER [sitting down again with a gesture of apology] True. I should have thought of that.

AGNES. I never complained, because I thought it was a book that would make him famous and bring him in money. Well, is that heap of old letters and bills and prescriptions all that came of it? Dont tell me: there is a book somewhere; and I want to know where it is. Did he go mad and destroy it? If not, who took it from him? Did that woman?

FESSLER. Good gracious, Mrs Haldenstedt!

AGNES. Oh, this dreadful ending to all our happiness! It spoils everything that was nice in our lives. When the first and best of it was over and we settled down, troubles came I know; but I had my memories, and could sit and think of them. Now they are all poisoned for me.

FESSLER [reflectively] Dear Mrs Haldenstedt: may I speak quite frankly to you?

AGNES. Why, I am begging and praying you to. But I can get nothing out of you but sympathy, as if you were only a visitor instead of going to marry my daughter.

FESSLER. You see, though your husband will be remembered as a great psychologist, he had to practise as a doctor to make a living. Well, the wickedest and worst people have to call in doctors just as often as respectable people; and a doctor can't have them coming to his own house where his wife and daughter are. He has to keep a consulting room somewhere where they can come. The landlady said he rented the room to see his friends in occasionally. I daresay the women he saw there were common women; but how do you know that they were not his patients?

AGNES. Dont deceive yourself; and dont try to deceive me. Whatever I may have said when I was upset, I knew very well all along that Bruno never went with common women from the streets. The landlady said it was always the same woman, and that she was a lady. When she ran away she took that book with her: you mark my words. [She rises and goes moodily to the console].

*They are interrupted by Lenkheim, who opens the door of the study and trots in flourishing a manuscript.*

LENKHEIM. See here!

AGNES. The book!

LENKHEIM. I have just found an unfinished lecture on varieties of sleep.

AGNES [disappointed] Only a lecture! [Taking the manuscript] Why, it's only six pages. And what can it mean? There is only one sort of sleep.

LENKHEIM. Not at all. He says that hardly any two people sleep in the same way. Every case is an individual one. You must read it, Fessler.

FESSLER [eagerly] How interesting! May I look. [Taking it from Mrs Haldenstedt] Thank you. I'll read it in the study.

Bruno was really leading, and what has become of all that work he did.

LENKHEIM. But the lecture on varieties of sleep—

AGNES. Stuff! I know the variety of sleep he learnt from her. [Looking at him queerly] Why do you want to prevent me from finding her out?

LENKHEIM [meeting her eye with imposing firmness] Solely for your own sake, Mrs Haldenstedt. How could it possibly affect me? Banish this abandoned female from your mind, and trust to Time. Time is the great healer. Time will restore your happiness.

AGNES. Well, Time works wonders, they say. But it will never comfort me until I know for certain that the happiness he had with me was the right sort of happiness, and the happiness he had with the other woman the wrong sort. How do I know that she wasn't a cleverer woman than I am? I don't care that [snapping her fingers] how young she is, or how pretty she is: Time will bring her to my level in those ways soon enough. But I'm not clever at the things he was clever at. I don't understand science nor care about it. If I have to keep the house spick and span I can't always keep myself spick and span; and I know he was particular about such things. That's where she might have cut me out. She might easily have persuaded him that she was the right woman for him, and that I was the wrong one.

LENKHEIM. No, no. You were an excellent wife to him, Mrs Haldenstedt; and he knew it.

AGNES. I don't say I wasn't. But she hadn't to keep the house for him. She had nothing to do but please him. And if she was clever into the bargain, what chance had I?

*Edith comes in from the corridor.*

EDITH. Good morning, Professor.

LENKHEIM [relieved by the interruption] Good morning. Will you excuse me, Mrs Haldenstedt: I have a few words to say to Fessler before Jitta comes.

AGNES. You have been so good. I will think over your advice: indeed I will.

LENKHEIM [encouragingly] Da. [He waves his hand to Edith, and goes into the study, leaving the mother and daughter alone together.]

AGNES [looking after him bitterly as she goes back to her place at the table] It's easy for him to talk.

EDITH [wandering about restlessly between the table and the console] Why do you listen to him? Why do you run to strangers when you want to talk about father? Why should our being mother and daughter keep us so far apart?

AGNES. What a thing to say, child.

EDITH [going to her] Of course if you don't want me, mother, I don't want to force myself on you.

AGNES [dutifully, without real feeling] Well, of course, darling, I want you.

EDITH [irritated] No, not of course, not in the way you think. Has it occurred to you that it is rather hard on me to be left entirely to myself when things are so serious with us?

AGNES. I don't know what you have to complain of. You used to trust me to know what was right for you, and now you have suddenly turned on me. Surely, child, nobody can be a better judge of what is best for you than your own mother. Here I am, worried to death almost; and you making it worse for me by setting yourself against me.

EDITH. I am not setting myself against you, mother. What I am setting myself against is being expected to go through life blindfold, or pretending to be blindfold. I am to be a good little child, and not know anything nor feel anything that little children ought not to know and feel, just when I, as a woman, most want the companionship of another woman to whom I can pour out my feelings and my sorrow on equal terms.

AGNES. I can't understand you, child; and I won't have you talking to me like that.

EDITH. I often wonder whether you have ever understood anybody. Perhaps you did not understand father.

AGNES. You dare—

EDITH [continuing impetuously] Oh, I know very well how

tidy you kept his house for him, just as I keep my room. You did your duty: nobody can blame you. But was his house a home for him, as his heart made it a home for me?

AGNES. You are simply silly, child. Your grief and your crazy love for your father have turned your head. I wonder what you would say if you really knew.

EDITH [scornfully] If I really knew! Do you suppose any girl of my age nowadays does not know more than you were ever taught?

AGNES [shrieking] What?

EDITH. I know, as well as you do, where my father died, and how he died.

*Mrs Haldenstedt covers her eyes in horror. Fessler, opening the study door, appears on the threshold.*

AGNES. Oh, how dreadful! This will kill me. [To Edith, rising] Oh, now I know what you are. Just as bad as your father! Just as bad as your father!

FESSLER. What on earth is the matter?

AGNES. Don't ask me. Oh, this is beyond everything. Let me go [she rushes from the room].

FESSLER. What have you done?

EDITH [coolly] Told her I knew. I had to.

FESSLER [closing the door, and coming softly to Edith] My dear: you have dragged the poor woman down from her little heaven.

EDITH. My father's wife might have had a heaven on earth; but that poor woman, as you call her, did not know even how to begin.

FESSLER. Your grief is carrying you too far. Try not to be unjust to her.

EDITH. I am not unjust. It is my father who needs justice.

FESSLER. It is not much use, is it, giving justice to the dead and withholding it from the living?

EDITH. You need not lecture me: I am on my guard.

FESSLER. Against what?

EDITH. Against sharing my father's fate.

FESSLER [*terrified*] Dying.

EDITH. No. Living in utter loneliness.

FESSLER. Oh, that! How you frightened me! But you know, dear, you mustn't worry too much about your father. It's a sort of hypochondria; and it may make you really ill.

EDITH [*scornfully*] Yes, I know. What can't be cured must be endured; so let us get away from this unfortunate affair and fall back into the current of everyday life. That is what you want me to do. But I cannot do it. He was everything to me: I cannot describe what I feel: it is as if I were a branch broken off from him, a limb torn out of him, as if I were bleeding to death of the wound that killed him. As I see him now he is quite different from what he seemed to me when he was alive, and much greater. I think of him imprisoned in these walls, longing for his proper happiness, and then finding too late the woman who was his real destiny.

FESSLER. Ah yes: destiny! destiny! He had to fulfil his destiny, I suppose.

EDITH. He did not fulfil it. Life fulfils destiny, not death.

FESSLER [*prosaically*] Well, you know, death is a sort of destiny as well. If you are right, and he really was lonely here owing to your mother being incompatible and all that, then I quite agree it was a mercy he hit on somebody who could understand him and comfort him. Still, you must be careful not to idealize a person you don't know. You see, everybody is an ideal person to us until we meet them; and then, undoubtedly, some of the gilt comes off the gingerbread. I am so desperately afraid that if you find her out, she will prove a horrible disappointment to you.

EDITH. Never fear. I know my father too well. [*Turning fiercely on him*] But that you can think so little of him as to believe what other people are whispering about him: yes, and about her: you! who have worked with him and had all his confidence! that digs a gulf between us.

FESSLER. Oh don't say that. You can't mean it, Edith. I love you. I have the truest respect for your father.

EDITH. Then how can you belittle him so?

FESSLER. My dear, I am a man; and I know more about men's ways than you do. A man is a very mixed sort of animal. Ask any experienced man, and he will tell you that there is a certain side to human nature that must just be ruled out in judging people's characters. Even the best men are subject to aberrations, or at least commonnesses, in their relations with women, just as they will eat rotten cheese, and half-putrid partridges that are really only fit for pigs.

EDITH. You are not making it any better by saying such disgusting things.

FESSLER. Yes; but you want the truth, dont you? You know very well that Goethe was a great man; but the fine ladies of Weimar were shocked by his marriage. Rousseau was a great man; but his Teresa married a groom after his death.

EDITH. My father was a gentleman. He was worlds above Rousseau in refinement, and even above Goethe.

FESSLER. Well, I could say something more; but I suppose I mustn't.

EDITH. What more can you say? Is it something more against my father?

FESSLER. Not exactly against him; but still—

EDITH. Well, still?

FESSLER. He married your mother.

EDITH [staggered] Oh! How mean of you to throw that in his face! Why do you not point out what is so clear to any unprejudiced mind, that a man who made a mistake like that once would be the last person in the world to make the same mistake again?

FESSLER [with placid obstinacy] Because I am sorry to say, my dear, that men's lives consist mostly of their making the same mistake over and over again. I see a lot of that as a doctor. Look at your mother: she knows that if she eats prawns and cucumbers she will have a wretched night; but she never can resist them. I knew a man who was married three times; and everyone of his wives drank.

EDITH. The more you say, the more I see that we shall

never understand one another, and that you will never feel about my father as I do. I could not have believed you could be so coarse. Nobody in this house understands me, neither my mother nor you nor anybody.

FESSLER. But if you want people to understand you, you must be reasonable. I often used to have to say that to your father. You take after him, you know.

EDITH. If I do I must take care not to make the mistake in marrying that he made. Doctor Fessler: I am sorry; but I cannot be your wife.

FESSLER. I dont mind that so much for the present if only you wont call me Doctor Fessier. It's ridiculous. You dont expect me to call you Miss Haldenstedt, do you?

EDITH. Yes I do.

FESSLER. Then I wont. You see, I dont know how long this mood of yours will last.

EDITH. Life is short: dont waste any more of yours on me. I shall not go back from what I have said.

FESSLER. Neither shall I. I can wait.

EDITH. I cannot prevent your waiting. Everybody seems to think they know my own mind better than I do myself. I can only tell you one thing. I have one object in life now, and one only.

FESSLER. And what is that, if I may ask?

EDITH. To find the woman who made my father happy, and to force you to confess that she is high heavens above your Goethe's Christiane, and your Rousseau's Teresa, and —you neednt remind me—above my own mother.

FESSLER. Well, I hope you may, darling. Does that please you?

*Jitta comes in from the corridor. Fessler pulls himself together into his best professional bedside manner. Edith rushes to Jitta and embraces her.*

EDITH. Oh, how good of you to come! How glad I am to see you!

JITTA. Is your mother at home?

EDITH. Yes: do you want her? I will send her [*she runs out*].

JITTA [coming to Fessler in the middle of the room] What is the matter with the child?

FESSLER. She is still fearfully upset. She is having a hard night of it here.

JITTA [looking at him with quick sympathy] You are not looking very happy yourself, Doctor.

FESSLER. She has broken it off [*he narrowly misses a sob*].

JITTA. Oh, that mustn't be. Why, it was for your sake that I opened her eyes a little about her father.

FESSLER. I am afraid it had rather the opposite effect.

JITTA. I hope not. Tell me: does my husband know of this new turn?

FESSLER. Not yet. Perhaps you had better tell him. I don't know that I can go on working here every day if Edith sticks to it.

JITTA. Don't give in too soon, Doctor.

FESSLER. I am pretending not to—so her. But I am really afraid she may be in earnest.

JITTA. Is there nothing I can do?

FESSLER. It's very good of you, Mrs Lenkheim. But I must see this thing through myself, thank you. And now I must be off. [*He goes past her towards the door*].

JITTA [shaking his hand] Goodbye, Doctor. Don't despise my help.

FESSLER. Oh no, Mrs Lenkheim; but—

*Mrs Haldenstedt comes in.*

AGNES [still distracted] Oh, what is this that Edith tells me, Doctor?

FESSLER. We won't discuss it now, Mrs Haldenstedt. You had better talk it over with Mrs Lenkheim. Goodbye. Goodbye, Mrs Lenkheim. [*He bows to them and goes out*].

AGNES. Sit down, won't you? [*Jitta sits on the couch. Agnes sits down wearily beside her*]. He's gone; and Heaven knows whether he will ever come back. This is a marked house everybody deserts it. Who knows how soon I shall be left alone here to haunt the place like my own shadow? I shall sit alone, going over and over that dreadful time in my

imagination, with no relief but just thinking how I can catch that wretch that stole from me my right to be beside my husband when he died.

JITTA. She did not intend that. You may forgive her that, at least.

AGNES. Oh, you mustnt think it's mere spite and revenge. It's that I really loved Bruno to the last as I loved him from the first. He was all I had that I cared about. I am not like a man, to begin all over again with a new love: I shall never get away from it or get over it. Day by day all those years we lived together; sat at the same table; took it in turns to rock the cradle or take the child in our hands to pet it; and then he goes off to another woman without a word or a thought for me. [Crying] I didnt deserve it: I didnt indeed.

JITTA. There, dear, there! Dont torture yourself. After all, if he had died in your arms, you would still have had to grieve for him. It might even have broken your heart.

AGNES. Oh, if only it had! I could think of him then without bitterness and shame.

JITTA. Try to forgive him for the sake of the old days when you were young together. What does it matter what foolish things we old people do?

AGNES. I cant forgive him. Not while I am in the dark about her. Listen to me, Mrs Lenkheim. If I thought it was only her body that took him, I wouldnt care a straw. I have had thoughts myself about our young men at the college sports: only fancies of course; and I wouldnt have indulged them for the world; but a man might. What I cant bear is the thought that she might have been somebody like you.

JITTA [startled]. Like me!

AGNES. Yes; for he thought a great deal of you; and if you had been that sort of woman, I might have been jealous of you. You are clever in his way; and you could understand him when he was talking right above my head. You could talk about his work to him. I couldnt.

JITTA. Oh no, Mrs Hadenstedt: I knew better than that. Nothing annoys a man more than a woman who talks to him about his business and pretends to understand it. Do you know what Bruno always talked to me about? what it always came round to, no matter what subject he started with?

AGNES. What?

JITTA. You.

AGNES. Me!

JITTA. Yes, you, you, you, you. Do you know, I sometimes wanted to shake him for not taking a little more interest in me occasionally? His conscience was never easy about you. You had done everything for him; and he had taken it all and gone on with his scientific work: the work that did not pay, when he might have been making a fashionable practice for himself and leaving you comfortably off.

AGNES [beginning to cry] But I never grudged it to him. I wanted him to be great. I wasnt really as good a wife as I might have been. I worried him about things that he neednt have known anything about. It's in my nature: I cant help it.

JITTA. It was not in his nature to blame you for that. He understood. He was frightfully faithful to you. You possessed all his thoughts: you dominated his destiny: you haunted him. What right had you to take a great man like that all to yourself? I wanted a little bit of Bruno; but you stood always in the way. Marriage is a very wonderful thing. It held him as nothing else could hold him.

AGNES. But the other woman?

JITTA. Oh, the other woman! Need you make such a fuss about her? You dont even know whether she was not a patient who had to conceal the fact that she was consulting a doctor. There are such people, you know. But suppose she was what you think! Would a woman who had any serious relations with him have coolly walked off and left him to die? A pet dog would not have done such a thing. They would have found it at his side.

AGNES [excitedly] You think then that though he forgot what was due to himself, he didn't forget what was due to me? that when he went into that disgraceful place with another woman he was only making a convenience of her? that it was a mere chance that she was there to close his eyes, like a chambermaid in a hotel?

JITTA. She did not close his eyes. She stole away from his side after coldbloodedly covering up her tracks. Could you have done that?

AGNES. I never thought of that. Of course: of course. Yes: that shewed what she was, didn't it?

JITTA. What does it matter what she was? She came out of the dark, and went back into the dark. Leave her there, as she left him.

AGNES [shaking her head] I can't imagine how women can bring themselves to behave so. What sort of women must they be? She must have known that he could never have cared for her.

JITTA. You don't know how she got him there. But I know that if he really opened his heart to her, he talked to her about you.

AGNES [smiling] Well, I am sure, Mrs Lenkheim, this talk has made the most wonderful difference to me. You don't know how much good you have done me. It only shews how little we can trust our own feelings and our own judgment when such troubles come to us. The weight you have taken off my mind! you can't imagine.

JITTA. Have I? Then I have done what I came to do. [She rises].

AGNES [holding her] Oh, don't go yet. You know, it's very funny how one's mind works.

JITTA [sitting down again] How?

AGNES [slowly and almost regrettably] I'm so grateful to you, that I'm afraid of offending you if I tell you. But I am sure you will only laugh.

JITTA [with a melancholy smile] We both need a good laugh, don't we?

AGNES. Have you ever found that you have been all along thinking something that never came into your head for a single moment?

JITTA. That sounds a little difficult. I am afraid I don't quite follow.

AGNES. Of course you don't: it's too silly. But do you know that the moment you took that weight off my mind, and gave me back my peace and happiness—

JITTA [smiling] I am so glad that I did.

AGNES [nodding gratefully, and continuing] Well, that very moment I knew that I had been believing all along—but I don't think I ought to say it; only it's so funny.

JITTA. What?

AGNES. Why, that you were the woman. [She begins to chuckle].

JITTA. No!!!

AGNES. Yes I did.

JITTA. But really?

AGNES. Really and truly.

JITTA [beginning to laugh hysterically] How funny!

AGNES [her chuckles now culminating in hearty laughter] Isn't it? You're not angry, are you? Oh dear—[laughing more than ever].

JITTA. Oh no: of course not.

Jitta has a paroxysm of agonizing laughter; and Agnes accompanies her without a suspicion that she is not enjoying the joke in good faith. Jitta at last recovers her self-control with a desperate effort.

JITTA. Don't make me laugh any more: I am afraid I shall go into hysterics. I am still very far from well.

AGNES. It's such a shame to laugh at all at such a time. But for the life of me I couldn't help it.

JITTA [looking hard at her] You know, Mrs Haldenstedt, I was very very fond of him.

AGNES. I am sure you were, darling; and I shouldn't have minded a bit if it had been you: in fact I'm half disappointed that it wasn't, you have been such an angel to

me. Isn't it funny, the things that come into our heads. But it's wicked of me to make you talk and laugh so much, and you so ill. You're very pale, dear. Can I get you anything?

JITTA. If I might just lie down here for awhile. I—

AGNES [rising to make room for Jitta to recline] Yes, yes: of course you shall, dear. Make yourself comfortable.

JITTA. I don't want to go without seeing Edith.

AGNES [taken aback] Oh!

JITTA. What is it?

AGNES. I forgot all about Edith. Who is to tell her? She sees her father like a saint in a picture; and I could never put it to her in the wonderful way you put it to me. If only you would be so good as to tell her for me. Would you mind?

JITTA. Not in the least. Edith is like a child of my own to me: it would be the greatest happiness to me if I could set her mind at rest as you are good enough to think I have set yours.

AGNES. You have: indeed and indeed you have. I am sure what we owe you, with your dear husband coming here every day to set the papers in order, and you being more than an angel to me in spite of your illness, words can never say. Just lie quiet where you are; and I will send Edith to you. Oh, you have made me happy, dear! [She goes out into the corridor].

*Jitta, left alone, begins to laugh again hysterically, and is dissolving into convulsive sobs when she makes a great effort; springs up from the sofa; dashes the tears from her eyes with a proud gesture; goes to the glass; and has just made herself presentable when Edith appears. Her eyes are wide open and her expression one of joyful surprise and relief. She runs eagerly to Jitta.*

EDITH. What on earth have you done to mother? She is laughing. She is positively singing. Either you are a witch, or she has gone mad.

JITTA. Are you angry with her for daring to sing in this

house of mourning? Or angry with me for making her sing?

EDITH. Oh no: it's rather a relief. But it's very odd. How did you do it?

JITTA. She made me laugh before I made her sing. You mustn't be shocked, dear. There is always a sort of reaction. Nature must have a relief from any feeling, no matter how deep and sincere it is. Have you ever seen a soldier's funeral?

EDITH. No. Why?

JITTA. They play the Dead March as they go to the grave; but they play the merriest tunes they know on their way back.

EDITH. How unfeeling!

JITTA. Yes; but how natural! Your mother would have gone mad if she had gone on as she was for another week. I am not sure that I should not have gone mad myself if she had not made me laugh. [Taking Edith by the shoulders and looking straight at her] And now what I want to know is how I am to make you laugh. For you will go mad if you do not get back into everyday life again.

EDITH [backing to the table, and half sitting against its edge] Yes: I know. This house has been a sort of madhouse since my father died. We havnt spoken naturally, nor walked naturally, nor breathed naturally, nor thought naturally, because we were all so determined to feel naturally. Somehow, my mother's laughing and singing has made nonsense of it all suddenly.

JITTA. Then you are happy again? If so, I may as well go home.

EDITH. Happy! Oh no. But I am done with hypocrisy and conventionality; and that is such a relief that I seem happy by contrast. I suppose it is a sort of happiness to be able to give myself up at last wholly to my sorrow.

JITTA [sitting down in Lenheim's chair] Which sorrow? The old sorrow that God made for you, or the new one that you have made for yourself?

EDITH [straining up] I dont know what you mean.

JITTA. Doctor Fessler says you have jilted him.

EDITH. Did he call it jilting him?

JITTA. No. I call it that.

EDITH. But you cant think that. Do you know what he said?

JITTA. No. Anything very dreadful?

EDITH. He believes that my father died in the arms of a common woman of the streets.

JITTA. And he thinks your father must have been as worthless as the woman he died with. I see.

EDITH. Not at all. That is what is so dreadful. He thinks it makes no difference. He adores my father as much as he ever did; but he thinks you have to leave all that out when you are judging men. He thinks a woman doesnt matter. I cant forgive him for that. I couldnt marry a man unless he felt exactly as I do about my father.

JITTA. Is that reasonable, dear? How could poor Doctor Fessler feel as you feel? you! your father's daughter!

EDITH. Oh, of course I know that. I dont expect him to feel the same affection. But if he thought my father could go with low women—if he did not know for certain, as I know, that the woman my father loved must have been one of the best and noblest of women, I would rather die than let him touch me.

JITTA. My dear: how can he know for certain? You do not know for certain yourself.

EDITH. I know I cant prove it. But I am certain. And I will devote my life to proving it.

JITTA. How?

EDITH. I will find the woman: that is how. I have thought and thought about it. I know that she cannot be very far off. I know that her grief and desolation must be as great as mine: greater. I know she will love me because I am his daughter. And I know that she will be somebody worthy of him.

JITTA. Edith, Edith, how sentimental you are!

EDITH [fiercely] You call my feeling sentimentality! Are you going to disappoint me too?

JITTA [sternly] You must learn to expect disappointments. How do you know that if you found this woman she would not disappoint you? It is easy to imagine wonderful women worthy of your father's love. But the real person always kills the imagined person.

EDITH. He said that once.

JITTA. Well, is it not true? Can you think of any real woman among your acquaintances that you could bear to think of as that woman—even the best of them?

EDITH. You can't put me off that way. I tell you I know there is some woman who was real to my father; and he loved her. I shall love her when she is real to me. Besides, I have a queer sense that I know her quite as well as a real person; that she is here within reach of my hands if only I could recollect. I—I sometimes wonder does everybody know? does my mother know? •

JITTA [quickly] Your mother does not know. Your mother could never understand.

EDITH. Jitta: do you know?

JITTA. Yes.

EDITH. Jitta!!!

JITTA. Yes. I know that poor criminal. I know what has become of her. I know what she did. I know what she has suffered ever since.

EDITH. But how do you know? Oh, tell me. You must tell me now.

JITTA. When you are excited like that your voice is his voice. Oh, the agony of hearing it, and the happiness! You bring him to life again for me.

EDITH. Then it was—

JITTA. Only me, dear.

EDITH [fixing herself into Jitta's arms] Only you! Who better could it be? Of course it was you. I knew it all along, only I couldn't recollect. Oh, darling! Don't you want a daughter? Here I am. His daughter.

JITTA. Dearest, yes. You have been a daughter to me ever since I knew him. But we must be very careful, very discreet. You see, you are very young.

EDITH. Oh, don't begin that. I don't want that sort of mother.

JITTA. I know. But I mustn't take your devotion—it is devotion, isn't it?—

EDITH. Oh yes, yes.

JITTA. I mustn't take it under false pretences. Above all, you must not throw away your engagement because your lover does not feel about me as you do. He is right about me, you know: I am not a good woman. Have you quite forgotten that I have a husband, and that for your father's sake I was unfaithful to him?

EDITH [*naively*] Oh, but Alfred is such a chump!

JITTA [*a little shocked*] Edith!

EDITH. And papa was such a wonderful man! Nobody could blame you.

JITTA. I assure you a great many people would blame me so much that they would never speak to me again if they knew.

EDITH. More shame for them! Do such people matter?

JITTA. They do, dear. I am afraid they are the only people who do matter in this wretched world. So you mustn't tell them. You mustn't tell anybody.

EDITH [*slowly*] I suppose not.

JITTA. Did you intend to tell everybody?

EDITH. No, of course not: I am not such a fool as that. But I did think that if I told Doctor Fessler he might see that he was wrong.

JITTA. And you might forgive him. Very well: I give you leave to tell him. But you understand that if you tell him you must marry him; for you mustn't tell anyone except your husband.

EDITH. You want me to marry him?

JITTA. I do.

EDITH. Then I'll telephone him. I suppose that will do.

I am so happy now that it doesn't matter tuppence whom I marry. [Lenkheim opens the study door and is coming in when Edith, not hearing him, goes on] I'd marry anyone to please you. I'd even marry Alfred.

LENKHEIM. Thank you. [The two women spring up in dismay] Thats very kind of you, Edith, and very kind of Jitta to include me in the number of husbands she has apparently been offering you. But I have no intention of divorcing her at present.

EDITH [not knowing what else to say] It wasn't that. Mrs Lenkheim never offered you to me.

JITTA. Go off to the telephone, dear, and make it up with your man. I will make it up for you with Alfred.

LENKHEIM. Do, Edith. [He crosses the room to the other door, and opens it for her with sardonic politeness].

EDITH [to Lenkheim, after kissing Jitta rather defiantly] Mrs Lenkheim did not say a single unkind word about you. I did. [She nods mockingly in his face and goes out].

LENKHEIM. Have you told her?

JITTA [her bored manner with her husband contrasting strongly with her warm interest in Edith] She guessed. She knew. It is no use keeping secrets when they will not keep themselves. I have made her happy: that is all I care about. [She goes restlessly to the window-seat, and sits there looking out, with her shoulder turned to him].

LENKHEIM. And have you told the old woman? Have you made her happy?

JITTA. I have made her happy. But I did not tell her. The strange thing is that she guesses it too; but she will never know it. She doesn't want to know it. Edith did. That makes all the difference. I have made them both happy. I wish someone could make me happy.

LENKHEIM. As I unfortunately am only your husband, I suppose there is no use my trying.

JITTA [turning her face to him with open contempt] You!

LENKHEIM. Funny, isn't it?

JITTA [rising] Don't be insufferable. You owe it to your

position as an injured husband never to speak to me when we are alone and there are no appearances to be kept up. You swore not to. And you have been talking to me ever since, except when there was somebody else present to talk to.

LENKHEIM. Make no mistake, Jitta: when I swore that, I meant it.

JITTA [ironically] So it appears.

LENKHEIM. When you swore to be faithful to me, you meant it, didn't you?

JITTA [interrupting him curtly] You need not remind me of that again. I have not denied it. I have not excused myself. But I do not intend to have it thrown in my teeth every time we meet. [She turns away from him determinedly, and sits down in the chair between the table and the door].

LENKHEIM. Very well, then, don't you start reminding me every time we meet that I swore to do a good many things that I find I can't do. Is that a bargain?

JITTA [a little ashamed, feeling that she has allowed herself to descend to his level] Yes. I beg your pardon. I should not have said it. But please remember that you can hurt me more than I can hurt you, because you have done nothing wrong. You are within your rights: you are above reproach: you have the superior position morally: no taunts of mine can degrade you as your reproaches can degrade me. [Tragically] I am a miserable creature. I betrayed you to please myself. I deserted him in his extremity to save myself. Please leave me to my disgrace. Nothing that you can say or think can add to the contempt I feel for myself.

LENKHEIM [chuckling a little] How you enjoy being miserable, Jitta!

JITTA. Enjoy!!

LENKHEIM. You just revel in it. You think yourself such a jolly romantic figure. You think that everything that happens to you is extraordinarily interesting because it happens to you. And you think that everything that happens to me is quite uninteresting because it hasn't happened to you. But what has happened to you has

happened to lots of women—except, of course, the way it ended. And even that was an accident that might have happened to anyone.

JITTA. No doubt. Unfortunately, I did not behave as any decent woman would.

LENKHEIM. That is just where you are mistaken, darling. When you were brought to the point and put to the proof, you didn't behave romantically: you behaved very sensibly. You kept your head, and did just the right thing. You saved your reputation and my reputation. You prevented a horrible scandal. You have managed to make his wife and daughter happy. And yet you think you are ashamed of yourself because you were not found stretched on his dead body, with the limelight streaming on your white face, and the band playing slow music.

JITTA. Oh, what a nature you have, Alfred! You are prosaic to the core.

LENKHEIM [grinning] If you had only been clever enough to take me in, your success would have been complete. It wouldn't have been difficult. I always took you in when I had an adventure.

JITTA [rising, very unpleasantly surprised, and not a little furious] You! You have had adventures since we were married? You have deceived me?

LENKHEIM. Now don't begin imagining that I am a Don Juan. To be precise, I have kissed other women twice. I was drunk both times. And I had a serious affair with your dear friend Thelma Petersen. That lasted until she and her husband went back to Norway.

JITTA. Oh, how disgraceful! And you call her my friend?

LENKHEIM. I call Bruno Haldenstedt my friend. So you see I am not your moral superior. I thought it might restore your happiness a little to know that.

JITTA. Alfred: I will never speak to you nor cross the threshold of your house again.

LENKHEIM [more amused than ever] Except when you call to tell me so. When you let out about Haldenstedt I felt

just as you fee. now. Tomorrow you will think better of it, as I have thought better of it.

JITTA [more dignified than ever] If you imagine that any relations that could exist between Mrs Petersen and yourself were in the least like my relations with Bruno, you only shew for the thousandth time how incapable you are of understanding either him or me.

LENKHEIM. I'm afraid you dont understand either Thelma or me as sympathetically as I could wish. Thelma was a very superior woman, let me tell you. If my taste did not lie in the direction of superior women I shoulent have married you.

JITTA. I will not have it, Alfred. I will not be dragged down to your level.

LENKHEIM. Five minutes ago you were amusing yourself by pretending that you were beneath contempt.

JITTA. So I am, on my own plane, and on his. But not on yours.

LENKHEIM. I dont believe theres a woman alive who doesnt look on herself as a special creation, and consider her husband an inferior and common sort of animal.

JITTA. You forget that I did not think of Bruno in that way.

LENKHEIM. Yes; but then he wasnt your husband. Thelma thought me a much finer fellow than Petersen.

JITTA [exasperated] If you mention that woman to me again, I will break my promise to you, and walk straight out of your house before all the world.

LENKHEIM. That will only make us quits, because, as it happens, I am going to break my promise to you.

JITTA. How?

LENKHEIM. About the book. I have read it.

JITTA. Well?

LENKHEIM. Well, I'll be hanged if I put my name to it. In the first place nobody would believe I had ever written it. In the second, it's the most utter tommy-rot that was ever put forward as a serious contribution to

psychology. Why, it flatly contradicts everything I have been teaching for years past, and everything I was taught myself.

JITTA [*intensely angry*] Does that prove it to be tommyrot, or does it prove that you are an idiot?

LENKHEIM. I may be an idiot; but my idiocy is the accepted idiocy taught in the University at which I am a professor; and his idiocy is not taught anywhere. Do you forget that I have to earn bread for the household, and that your own money hardly pays for your dresses? This book would ruin us both.

JITTA. It is a sacred trust; and I swore to him that it should be fulfilled.

LENKHEIM. I didnt. And the old woman has just told me that he said the book was to be her insurance policy. No doubt I am Bruno's inferior; but I draw the line at helping him to rob his widow for my own profit.

JITTA. Then you refuse to carry out his intentions?

LENKHEIM. I cant carry out his intentions.

JITTA. You mean you wont.

LENKHEIM. I mean what I say. When he left me this book of his, he did so on the understanding that I was to know nothing of his relations with you. He hadnt quite such a low opinion of me as to suppose that I would take it as the price of my wife. Well, whose fault is it that I know all about it? Who let the secret out? You did.

JITTA [*collapsing into his chair*] Oh, how shamefully I have betrayed him at every step! How despicable I am!

LENKHEIM [*sympathetically*] Not a bit of it, dear. You have just said yourself that if secrets dont keep themselves, nobody can keep them. This secret wouldnt keep itself. Come! stop crying. If only you would be content to be a woman for a moment, and not a heroine! And oh Lord! if you only had the smallest sense of humor!

JITTA [*passionately*] You cant even try to console me without sneering at me. Do you know what Edith called you?

LENKHEIM. No. You can tell me if it will renew your feelings.

JITTA. She said you were a chump; and so you are.

LENKHEIM. All husbands are chumps, dear, after the first month or so. Jolly good thing for their wives too, sometimes.

JITTA. What are you going to do with that book?

LENKHEIM. If I had any regard for his reputation I should burn it at our domestic hearth.

JITTA [recovering her dignity; rising; and speaking with tranquil conviction] You shall not do that, Alfred.

LENKHEIM. Perhaps not; but it would serve you right if I did.

JITTA. It would not serve Edith right. Besides, his work, his reputation, his greatness—for whatever you may say I know that that book is the greatest that ever was written—belong not only to humanity, but to her. And I love her as if she were my own daughter. I have no other child.

LENKHEIM [wincing a little] My fault, I suppose. Oh, you can be nasty when you want to, Jitta.

JITTA. Oh, no, no. Will you never understand?

LENKHEIM. Probably not, being only a chump. Be a little amiable, Jitta: I havnt been so very hard on you, have I?

JITTA [insisting] You will not destroy the book? You will edit it? You will do everything for it that you could for a book of your own?

LENKHEIM. Well, if—

*Fessler and Edith come in arm-in-arm, followed by Mrs. Haldenstedt.*

EDITH. Here he is. Kiss him.

FESSLER [hastily] Tchut! [Taking Jitta's hand, and kissing it] I owe you my life's happiness, Mrs Lenkheim.

AGNES. I am sure we all owe you the happiness of our lives. You are our good angel: indeed you are. Oh, you are a lucky man, Mr Lenkheim, to have such a wife.

JITTA [striking in before he can reply] I have one more piece of news for you, Mrs Haldenstedt. Alfred has found your

husband's book. It is a masterpiece. He will edit it. He will do everything he could do for it if it were his own book.

PESSLER [triumphant] Splendid!

AGNES [surprised] Oh, think of that! Edith [she kisses Edith]! Doctor [she kisses the doctor]! Professor [she kisses Lenkheim]! Didn't I say she was our good angel?

LENKHEIM. And now, may I take my good angel home?

AGNES [to Jitta] Oh, must you go, dear?

JITTA [sweetly, to Agnes] Yes, dear. [Threateningly to Alfred] Come home. [She goes to the door].

LENKHEIM [cheerfully, as he shakes hands with everybody] Goodbye.

ALL [shaking hands] Goodbye. Goodbye. Goodbye.

JITTA [seriously] Alfred: come home.

LENKHEIM [nastily obeying] Yes, dear.

AGNES [as the door closes sharply behind them] She's too good for him.



## RIFLES AND TOMFOOLERIES

All playwrights and all actors tomfool sometimes if they can. The practice needs no apology if it amuses them and their audiences harmlessly. Irresponsible laughter is salutary in small quantities. One throws off these things as Beethoven threw off a few bagatelles, and Mozart a few senseless bravura pieces for friends who were violinists. Besides, tomfoolery is as classic as tragedy. High comedy seldom achieves a whole act without revealing traces of its origin in the altercations and topical discussions of the circus clown with the ringmaster: what else indeed are the passages between Monsieur Jourdain and his philosophers and fencing masters in Molière's most famous comedy? I could cite many examples from plays of my own which pretend to be highly serious. The following playlets are tomfooleries pure and simple, except the tragedietta, which is only a trifle. I do not mean that their words are utterly void of wit and wisdom, or their figures characterless; for this kind of work would be unbearable if it added deficiency to folly. I mean just what I say: they are tomfooleries.

On their topical side they are more or less out of date; but as the world continues to excite itself over the same sort of scandal they can always be adapted to the cries of the moment. They may disgust the admirers of my more pretentious work; but these highbrows must remember that there is a demand for little things as well as for big things, and that as I happen to have a few little things in my shop I may as well put them in the window with the rest.

AVON ST. LAWRENCE, July 1926.

THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE  
OR  
CONSTANCY UNREWARDED

BEING THE NOVEL OF CASHEL BYRON'S  
PROFESSION DONE INTO A STAGE PLAY  
IN THREE ACTS AND IN BLANK VERSE

## PREFACE

IT may be asked why I wrote *The Admirable Bashville* in blank verse. My answer is that the operation of the copyright law of that time (now happily superseded) left me only a week to write it in. Blank verse is so childishly easy and expeditious (hence, by the way, Shakespear's copious output), that by adopting it I was enabled to do within the week what would have cost me a month in prose.

Besides, I am fond of blank verse. Not nineteenth century blank verse, of course, nor indeed, with a very few exceptions, any post-Shakespearean blank verse. Nay, not Shakespearean blank verse itself later than the histories. I am quite sure that any one who is to recover the charm of blank verse must go back frankly to its beginnings, and start a literary pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. I like the melodious sing-song, the clear simple one-line and two-line sayings, and the occasional rhymed tags, like the half closes in an eighteenth century symphony, in Peele, Kyd, Greene, and the histories of Shakespear. Accordingly, I poetasted *The Admirable Bashville* in the primitive Elizabethan style. And lest the literary connoisseurs should declare that there was not a single correct line in all my three acts, I stole or paraphrased a few from Marlowe and Shakespear (not to

mention Henry Carey); so that if any man dared quote me derisively, he should do so in peril of inadvertently lighting on a purple patch from Hamlet or Faustus.

I also endeavored in this little play to prove that I was not the heartless creature some of my critics took me for. I observed the established laws of stage popularity and probability. I simplified the character of the heroine, and summed up her sweetness in the one sacred word: Love. I gave consistency to the heroism of Cashel. I paid to Morality, in the final scene, the tribute of poetic justice. I restored to Patriotism its usual place on the stage, and gracefully acknowledged The Throne as the fountain of social honor. I paid particular attention to the construction of the play, which will be found equal in this respect to the best contemporary models.

And the result was that the British playgoer, to whom Elizabethan English is a dead language, only half understood nine-tenths of the play, and applauded the other tenth (the big speeches) with a seriousness that was far funnier than any burlesque.

The play, by the way, should be performed on an Elizabethan stage, with traverses for the indoor scenes, and with only one interval after the second act.



# THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE ; OR, CONSTANCY unrewarded

## ACT I

*A glade in Wiltstoken Park*

*Enter LYDIA*

LYDIA. Ye leafy breasts and warm protecting wings  
Of mother trees that hatch our tender souls,  
And from the well of Nature in our hearts  
Thaw the intolerable inch of ice  
That bears the weight of all the stamping world,  
Hear ye me sing to solitude that I,  
Lydia Carew, the owner of these lands,  
Albeit most rich, most learned, and most wise,  
Am yet most lonely. What are riches worth  
When wisdom with them comes to show the purse  
    bearer  
That life remains unpurchasable ? Learning  
Learns but one lesson : doubt ! To excel all  
Is, to be lonely. Oh, ye busy birds,  
Engrossed with real needs, ye shameless trees

With arms outspread in welcome of the sun,  
 Your minds, bent singly to enlarge your lives,  
 Have given you wings and raised your delicate heads  
 High heavens above us crawlers.

*[A rook sets up a great cawing; and the other birds chatter loudly as a gust of wind sets the branches swaying. She makes as though she would shew them her sleeves.*

Lo, the leaves

That hide my drooping boughs! Mock me—poor maid!—  
 Deride with joyous comfortable chatter  
 These stolen feathers. Laugh at me, the clothed  
 one.  
 Laugh at the mind fed on foul air and books.  
 Books! Art! And Culture! Oh, I shall go mad.  
 Give me a mate that never heard of these,  
 A sylvan god, tree born in heart and sap;  
 Or else, eternal maidhood be my hap.

*[Another gust of wind and bird-chatter. She sits on the mossy root of an oak and buries her face in her hands*

CASHEL BYRON, in a white singlet and breeches, comes through the trees.

CASHEL. What's this? Whom have we here? A woman!

LYDIA [looking up] Yes.  
 CASHEL. You have no business here. I have. Away! Women distract me. Hence!

LYDIA. Bid you me hence?  
 I am upon mine own ground. Who are you?  
 I take you for a god, a sylvan god.  
 This place is mine: I share it with the birds,  
 The trees, the sylvan gods, the lovely company  
 Of haunted solitudes.

CASHEL. A sylvan god!  
 A goat-eared image! Do your statues speak?

Act I      or, Constan<sup>y</sup> Unrewarded      93

Walk? heave the chest with breath? or like a feather  
Lift you—like this?      [He sets her on her feet.

LYDIA [panting]    You take away my breath!  
You're strong. Your hands off, please. Thank you.

Farewell.

CASHEL. Before you go: when shall we meet again?

LYDIA. Why should we meet again?

CASHEL.      Who knows? We shall.

That much I know by instinct. What's your name?

LYDIA. Lydia Carew.

CASHEL.      Lydia's a pretty name.

Where do you live?

LYDIA.      I' the castle.

CASHEL [thunderstruck]      Do not say  
You are the lady of this great domain.

LYDIA. I am.

CASHEL.      Accursed luck! I took you for  
The daughter of some farmer. Well, your pardon.

I came too close: I looked too deep. Farewell.

LYDIA. I pardon that. Now tell me who you are.

CASHEL. Ask me not whence I come, nor what  
I am.

You are the lady of the castle. I

Have but this hard and blackened hand to live by.

LYDIA. I have felt its strength and envied you. Your  
name?

I have told you mine.

CASHEL.      My name is Cashel Byron.

LYDIA. I never heard the name; and yet you utter it  
As men announce a celebrated name.

Forgive my ignorance.

CASHEL.      I bless it, Lydia.

I have forgot your other name.

LYDIA.      Carew.

Cashel's a pretty name too.

MELLISH [calling through the wood] Coo-ee ! B  
CASHEL. A thousand curses ! Oh, I beg you, go  
This is a man you must not meet.

MELLISH [further off] Coo-ee !

LYDIA. He's losing us. What does he in my w  
CASHEL. He is a part of what I am. What that  
You must not know. It would end all between us.  
And yet there's no dishonor in't : your lawyer,  
Who let your lodges to me, will vouch me honest.  
I am ashamed to tell you what I am—  
At least, as yet. Some day, perhaps.

MELLISH [nearer] Coo-ee !

LYDIA. His voice is nearer. Fare you well, my te  
When next your rent falls due, come to the castle.  
Pay me in person. Sir : your most obedient.

[She curtsies and  
CASHEL. Lives in this castle ! Owns this park  
lady

Marry a prizefighter ! Impossible.  
And yet the prizefighter must marry her.

*Enter MELLISH*

Ensanguined swine, whelped by a doggish dam,  
Is this thy park, that thou, with voice obscene,  
Fillst it with yodeled yells, and screamst my name  
For all the world to know that Cashel Byron  
Is training here for combat.

MELLISH. Swine you me ?  
I've caught you, have I ? You have found a woman  
Let her shew here again, I'll set the dog on her.  
I will. I say it. And my name's Bob Mellish.

CASHEL. Change thy initial and be truly hight  
Hellish. As for thy dog, why dost thou keep one  
And bark thyself ? Begone.

MELLISH I'll not begone.  
You shall come back with me and do your duty—  
Your duty to your backers, do you hear?  
You have not punched the bag this blessed day.

CASHEL. The putrid bag engirdled by thy belt  
Invites my fist.

MELLISH [weeping] Ingrate! O wretched lot!  
Who would a trainer be? O Mellish, Mellish,  
Trainer of heroes, builder-up of brawn,  
Vicarious victor, thou greatest champions  
That quickly turn thy tyrants. But beware:  
Without me thou art nothing. Disobey me,  
And all thy boasted strength shall fall from thee.  
With flaccid muscles and with failing breath  
Facing the fist of thy more faithful foe,  
I'll see thee on the grass cursing the day  
Thou didst forswear thy training.

CASHEL. Noisome quack  
That canst not from thine own abhorrent visage  
Take one carbuncle, thou contaminat'st  
Even with thy presence my untainted blood.  
Preach abstinence to rascals like thyself  
Rotten with surfeiting. Leave me in peace.  
This grove is sacred: thou profanest it.  
Hence! I have business that concerns thee not.

MELLISH. Ay, with your woman. You will lose your  
fight.  
Have you forgot your duty to your backers?  
Oh, what a sacred thing your duty is!  
What makes a man but duty? Where were we  
Without our duty? Think of Nelson's words:  
England expects that every man—

CASHEL. Shall twaddle  
About his duty. Mellish: at no hour  
Can I regard thee wholly without loathing;

But when thou playst the moralist, by Heaven,  
My soul flies to my fist, my fist to thee;  
And never did the Cyclops' hammer fall  
On Mars's armor—but enough of that.  
It does remind me of my mother.

MELLISH.

Ah,

Byron, let it remind thee. Once I heard  
An old song: it ran thus. [He clears his throat] At  
Ahem!

[Sings]—They say there is no other  
Can take the place of mother—

I am out o' voice: forgive me; but remember:  
The mother—were that sainted woman here—  
Would say, Obey thy trainer.

CASHEL. Now, by Heaven,  
Some fate is pushing thee upon thy doom.  
Canst thou not hear thy sands as they run out?  
They thunder like an avalanche. Old man:  
Two things I hate, my duty and my mother.  
Why dost thou urge them both upon me now?  
Presume not on thine age and on thy nastiness.  
Vanish, and promptly.

MELLISH. Can I leave thee here  
Thus thinly clad, exposed to vernal dews?  
Come back with me, my son, unto our lodge.

CASHEL. Within this breast a fire is newly lit  
Whose glow shall sun the dew away, whose radiance  
Shall make the orb of night hang in the heavens  
Unnoticed, like a glow-worm at high noon.

MELLISH. Ah me, ah me, where wilt thou spend  
night?

CASHEL. Wiltstoken's windows wandering beneath  
Wiltstoken's holy bell hearkening,  
Wiltstoken's lady loving breathlessly.

MELLISH. The lady of the castle! Thou art mad.

CASHEL. Tis thou art mad to trifle in my path.  
Thwart me no more. Begone.

MELLISH. My boy, my son,  
I'd give my heart's blood for thy happiness.  
Thwart thee, my son! Ah no. I'll go with thee.  
I'll brave the dews. I'll sacrifice my sleep.  
I am old—no matter: ne'er shall it be said  
Mellish deserted thee.

CASHEL. You resolute gods  
That will not spare this man, upon your knees  
Take the disparity twixt his age and mine.  
Now from the ring to the high judgment seat  
I step at your behest. Bear you me witness  
This is not Victory, but Execution.

[He solemnly projects his fist with colossal force against  
the waistcoat of Mellish, who doubles up like a folded  
towel, and lies without sense or motion.

And now the night is beautiful again.

[The castle clock strikes the hour in the distance.  
Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark! Hark!  
Hark! Hark! Hark!

It strikes in poetry. Tis ten o'clock.  
Lydia: to thee!

[He steals off towards the castle. MELLISH stirs and  
groans.

## ACT II

### SCENE I

London. A room in Lydia's house

Enter LYDIA and LUCIAN

LYDIA. Welcome, dear cousin, to my London house.  
Of late you have been chary of your visits.

LUCIAN. I have been greatly occupied of late.  
The minister to whom I act as scribe  
In Downing Street was born in Birmingham,  
And, like a thoroughbred commercial statesman,  
Splits his infinitives, which I, poor slave,  
Must reunite, though all the time my heart  
Yearns for my gentle coz's company.

LYDIA. Lucian: there is some other reason. Th:  
Since England was a nation every mood  
Her scribes have prepositionally split;  
But thine avoidance dates from yestermonth.

LUCIAN. There is a man I like not haunts this ho

LYDIA. Thou speakst of Cashel Byron?

LUCIAN. Aye, of  
Hast thou forgotten that eventful night  
When as we gathered were at Hoskyn House  
To hear a lecture by Herr Abendgasse,  
He placed a single finger on my chest,  
And I, ensorcel'd, would have sunk supine  
Had not a chair received my falling form.

LYDIA. Pooh! That was but by way of illustrat

LUCIAN. What right had he to illustrate his point  
Upon my person? Was I his assistant  
That he should try experiments on me  
As Simpson did on his with chloroform?  
Now, by the cannon balls of Galileo  
He hath unmanned me: all my nerve is gone.  
This very morning my official chief,  
Tapping with friendly forefinger this button,  
Levelled me like a thunderstricken elm  
Flat upon the Colonial Office floor.

LYDIA. Fancies, coz.

LUCIAN. Fancies! Fits! the chief said fits!  
Delirium tremens! the chlorotic dance  
Of Vitus! What could any one have thought?

Your ruffian friend hath ruined me. By Heaven,  
I tremble at a thumbnail. Give me drink.

LYDIA. What ho, without there ! Bashville.

BASHVILLE [without] Coming, madam.

*Enter BASHVILLE*

LYDIA. My cousin ails, Bashville. Procure some wet.  
[Exit BASHVILLE.

LUCIAN. Some wet!!! Where learnt you that atrocious word?

This is the language of a flower-girl.

LYDIA. True. It is horrible. Said I "Some wet"? I meant, some drink. Why did I say "Some wet"? Am I ensorcelled too? "Some wet"! Fie! fie! I feel as though some hateful thing had stained me. Oh, Lucian, how could I have said "Some wet"?

LUCIAN. The horrid conversation of this man Hath numbed thy once unfailing sense of fitness.

LYDIA. Nay, he speaks very well: he's literate: Shakespear he quotes unconsciously.

LUCIAN. And yet  
Anon he talks pure pothouse.

*Enter BASHVILLE*

BASHVILLE. Sir: your potion.

LUCIAN. Thanks. [He drinks]. I am better.

A NEWSBOY [calling without] Extra special Star!  
Result of the great fight! Name of the winner!

LYDIA. Who calls so loud?

BASHVILLE. The papers, madam.

LYDIA. Why?  
Hath ought momentous happened?

BASHVILLE. Madam: yes.

[He produces a newspaper.

All England for these thrilling paragraphs  
A week has waited breathless.

LYDIA. Read them us.

BASHVILLE [reading] "At noon to-day, unkno  
the police,  
Within a thousand miles of Wormwood Scrubbs,  
Th' Australian Champion and his challenger,  
The Flying Dutchman, formerly engaged  
I' the mercantile marine, fought to a finish.  
Lord Worthington, the well-known sporting peer  
Acted as referee."

LYDIA. Lord Worthington!

BASHVILLE. "The bold Ned Skene revisited  
ropes  
To hold the bottle for his quondam novice ;  
Whilst in the seaman's corner were assembled  
Professor Palmer and the Chelsea Snob.  
Mellish, whose epigastrium has been hurt,  
Tis said, by accident at Wiltstoken,  
Looked none the worse in the Australian's corner.  
The Flying Dutchman wore the Union Jack :  
His colors freely sold amid the crowd ;  
But Cashel's well-known spot of white on blue —

LYDIA. Whose, did  
BASHVILLE.  
LYDIA.  
Wout hand—a chair—

BASHVILLE. Madam: you're ill.  
LYDIA. Proc  
What you have read I do not understand;  
Yet I will bear it through. Proceed.

LUCIAN. Proceed.  
BASHVILLE. "But Cashel's well-known spot of  
on blue  
Was fairly rushed for. Time was called at twelve,

When, with a smile of confidence upon  
His ocean-beaten mug——”

LYDIA. His mug?

LUCIAN [explaining] His face.

BASHVILLE [continuing] “The Dutchman came un-  
daunted to the scratch,

But found the champion there already. Both  
Most heartily shook hands, amid the cheers  
Of their encouraged backers. Two to one  
Was offered on the Melbourne nonpareil ;  
And soon, so fit the Flying Dutchman seemed,  
Found takers everywhere. No time was lost  
In getting to the business of the day.

The Dutchman led at once, and seemed to land  
On Byron’s dicebox ; but the seaman’s reach,  
Too short for execution at long shots,  
Did not get fairly home upon the ivory ;  
And Byron had the best of the exchange.”

LYDIA. I do not understand. What were they doing ?

LUCIAN. Fighting with naked fists.

LYDIA. Oh, horrible !

I’ll hear no more. Or stay : how did it end ?  
Was Cashel hurt ?

LUCIAN [to BASHVILLE] Skip to the final round.

BASHVILLE. “Round Three : the rumors that had gone  
about

Of a breakdown in Byron’s recent training  
Seemed quite confirmed. Upon the call of time  
He rose, and, looking anything but cheerful,  
Proclaimed with every breath Bellows to Mend.  
At this point six to one was freely offered  
Upon the Dutchman ; and Lord Worthington  
Plunged at this figure till he stood to lose  
A fortune should the Dutchman, as seemed certain,  
Take down the number of the Pankey boy.

The Dutchman, glutton as we know he is,  
 Seemed this time likely to go hungry. Cashel  
 Was clearly groggy as he slipped the sailor,  
 Who, not to be denied, followed him up,  
 Forcing the fighting mid tremendous cheers."

LYDIA. Oh stop—no more—or tell the worst at once  
 I'll be revenged. Bashville: call the police.  
 This brutal sailor shall be made to know  
 There's law in England.

LUCIAN. Do not interrupt him:  
 Mine ears are thirsting. Finish, man. What next?

BASHVILLE. "Forty to one, the Dutchman's friend  
 exclaimed.

Done, said Lord Worthington, who shewed himself  
 A sportsman every inch. Barely the bet  
 Was booked, when, at the reeling champion's jaw  
 The sailor, bent on winning out of hand,  
 Sent in his right. The issue seemed a cert,  
 When Cashel, ducking smartly to his left,  
 Cross-countered like a hundredweight of brick——"

LUCIAN. Death and damnation!

LYDIA. Oh, what does it mean

BASHVILLE. "The Dutchman went to grass, a beaten  
 man."

LYDIA. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah! Oh, well done  
 Cashel!

BASHVILLE. "A scene of indescribable excitement  
 Ensued; for it was now quite evident  
 That Byron's grogginess had all along  
 Been feigned to make the market for his backers.  
 We trust this sample of colonial smartness  
 Will not find imitators on this side.  
 The losers settled up like gentlemen;  
 But many felt that Byron shewed bad taste  
 In taking old Ned Skene upon his back,

And, with Bob Mellish tucked beneath his oxter,  
Sprinting a hundred yards to show the crowd  
The perfect pink of his condition"—[*a knock*].

LYDIA [*turning pale*] Bashville  
Didst hear? A knock.

BASHVILLE. Madam: tis Byron's knock.  
Shall I admit him?

LUCIAN. Reeking from the ring!  
Oh, monstrous! Say you're out.

LYDIA. Send him away.  
I will not see the wretch. How dare he keep  
Secrets from me? I'll punish him. Pray say  
I'm not at home. [*BASHVILLE turns to go.*] Yet stay  
I am afraid  
He will not come again.

LUCIAN. A consummation  
Devoutly to be wished by any lady.  
Pray, do you wish this man to come again?

LYDIA. No, Lucian. He hath used me very ill.  
He should have told me. I will ne'er forgive him.  
Say, Not at home.

BASHVILLE. Yes, madam. [*Exit.*]

LYDIA. Stay—

LUCIAN [*stepping her*] No, Lydia:  
You shall not countermind that proper order.  
Oh, would you cast the treasure of your mind,  
The thousands at your bank, and, above all,  
Your unassailable social position  
Before this soulless mass of beef and brawn.

LYDIA. Nay, coz: you're prejudiced.

CASHEL [*without*] Liar and slave!

LYDIA. What words were those?

LUCIAN. The man is drunk with slaughter.

*Enter BASHVILLE running: he shuts the door and looks about him*

BASHVILLE. Save yourselves: at the staircase foot  
champion

Sprawls on the mat, by trick of wrestler tripped;  
But when he rises, woe betide us all!

LYDIA. Who bade you treat my visitor with violence?  
BASHVILLE. He would not take my answer;  
the door

Back in my face; gave me the lie i' th' throat;  
Averred he felt your presence in his bones.  
I said he should feel mine there too, and felled him.  
Then fled to bar your door.

LYDIA. O lover's instinct!  
He felt my presence. Well, let him come in.  
We must not fail in courage with a fighter.  
Unlock the door.

LUCIAN. Stop. Like all women, Lydia.  
You have the courage of immunity.  
To strike you were against his code of honor;  
But me, above the belt, he may perform on  
T' th' height of his profession. Also Bashville.

BASHVILLE. Think not of me, sir. Let him come in worst.

Oh, if the valor of my heart could weigh  
The fatal difference twixt his weight and mine,  
A second battle should he do this day:  
Nay, though outmatched I be, let but my mistress  
Give me the word: instant I'll take him on  
Here—now—at catchweight. Better bite the carpet  
A man, than fly, a coward.

LUCIAN. Bravely said:  
I will assist you with the poker.

LYDIA. No:  
I will not have him touched. Open the door.

BASHVILLE. Destruction knocks thereat. I smile, and open.

[BASHVILLE opens the door. *Dead silence.* CASHEL enters, in tears. *A solemn pause.*

CASHEL. You know my secret?

LYDIA. Yes.

CASHEL. And thereupon You bade your servant fling me from your door.

LYDIA. I bade my servant say I was not here.

CASHEL [to BASHVILLE] Why didst thou better thy instruction, man?

Hadst thou but said, "She bade me tell thee this,"  
Thou'dst burst my heart. I thank thee for thy mercy.

LYDIA. Oh, Lucian, didst thou call him "drunk with slaughter"?

Canst thou refrain from weeping at his woe?

CASHEL [to LUCIAN] The unwritten law that shields the amateur

Against professional resentment, saves thee.

O coward, to traduce behind their backs

Defenceless prizefighters!

LUCIAN. Thou dost avow  
Thou art a prizefighter.

CASHEL. It was my glory,  
I had hoped to offer to my lady there  
My belts, my championships, my heaped-up stakes,  
My undefeated record; but I knew  
Behind their blaze a hateful secret lurked.

LYDIA. Another secret?

LUCIAN. Is there worse to come?

CASHEL. Know ye not then my mother is an actress?

LUCIAN. How horrible!

LYDIA. Nay, nay: how interesting!

CASHEL. A thousand victories cannot wipe out

That birthstain. Oh, my speech bewrayeth  
My earliest lesson was the player's speech  
In Hamlet ; and to this day I express myself  
More like a mobled queen than like a man  
Of flesh and blood. Well may your cousin s  
What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba ?

LUCIAN. Injurious upstart : if by Hecuba  
Thou pointest darkly at my lovely cousin,  
Know that she is to me, and I to her,  
What never canst thou be. I do defy thee ,  
And naugre all the odds thy skill doth give,  
Outside I will await thee.

LYDIA. I forbid  
Expressly any such duello. Bashville :  
The door. Put Mr Webber in a hansom,  
And bid the driver hie to Downing Street.  
No answer : tis my will.

[*Exeunt LUCIAN and*  
*And now, farewell*

You must not come again, unless indeed  
You can some day look in my eyes and say :  
Lydia : my occupation's gone.

CASHEL. Ah no :  
It would remind you of my wretched mother.  
O God, let me be natural a moment !  
What other occupation can I try ?  
What would you have me be ?

LYDIA. A gentleman  
CASHEL. A gentleman ! I, Cashel Byron,  
To be the thing that bets on me ! the fool  
I flatter at so many coins a lesson !  
The screaming creature who beside the ring  
Gamblies with basest wretches for my blood,  
And pays with money that he never earned !  
Let me die broken hearted rather !

LYDIA.

But

You need not be an idle gentleman.  
I call you one of Nature's gentlemen.

CASHEL. Thats the collection for the loser, Lydia.  
I am not wont to need it. When your friends  
Contest elections, and at foot o' th' poll  
Rue their presumption, tis their wont to claim  
A moral victory. In a sort they are  
Nature's M.P.s. I am not yet so threadbare  
As to accept these consolation stakes.

LYDIA. You are offended with me.

CASHEL.

Yes I am.

I can put up with much ; but—"Nature's gentleman"!  
I thank your ladyship of Lyons, but  
Must beg to be excused.

LYDIA. But surely, surely,  
To be a prizefighter, and maul poor mariners  
With naked knuckles, is no work for you.

CASHEL. Thou dost arraign the inattentive Fates  
That weave my thread of life in ruder patterns  
Than these that lie, antimacassarly,  
Asprent thy drawingroom. As well demand  
Why I at birth chose to begin my life  
A speechless babe, hairless, incontinent,  
Hobbling upon all fours, a nurse's nuisance ?  
Or why I do propose to lose my strength,  
To blanch my hair, to let the gums recede  
Far up my yellowing teeth, and finally  
Lie down and moulder in a rotten grave ?  
Only one thing more foolish could have been,  
And that was to be born, not man, but woman.  
This was thy folly, why rebuk'st thou mine ?

LYDIA. These are not things of choice.

CASHEL. And did I choose  
My quick divining eye, my lightning hand,

My springing muscle and untiring heart?  
Did I implant the instinct in the race  
That found a use for these, and said to me,  
Fight for us, and be fame and fortune thine?

LYDIA. But there are other callings in the world.

CASHEL. Go tell thy painters to turn stockbrokers  
Thy poet friends to stoop o'er merchants' desks  
And pen prose records of the gains of greed.  
Tell bishops that religion is outworn,  
And that the Pampa to the horsebreaker  
Opens new careers. Bid the professor quit  
His fraudulent pedantries, and do i' the world  
The thing he would teach others. Then return  
To me and say: Cashel: they have obeyed;  
And on that pyre of sacrifice I, too,  
Will throw my championship.

LYDIA. But tis so cruel.

CASHEL. Is it so? I have hardly noticed that,  
So cruel are all callings. Yet this hand,  
That many a two days bruise hath ruthless given,  
Hath kept no dungeon locked for twenty years,  
Hath slain no sentient creature for my sport.  
I am too squeamish for your dainty world,  
That cowers behind the gallows and the lash,  
The world that robs the poor, and with their spoil  
Does what its tradesmen tell it. Oh, your ladies  
Sealskinred and egret-feathered; all defiance  
To Nature; cowering if one say to them  
"What will the servants think?" Your gentlemen  
Your tailor-tyrannized visitors of whom  
Flutter of wing and singing in the wood  
Make chickenbutchers. And your medicine men  
Groping for cures in the tormented entrails  
Of friendly dogs. Pray have you asked all these  
To change their occupations? Find you mine

So grimly crueler ? I cannot breathe  
An air so petty and so poisonous.

LYDIA. But find you not their manners very nice ?

CASHEL. To me, perfection. Oh, they condescend  
With a rare grace. Your duke, who condescends  
Almost to the whole world, might for a Man  
Pass in the eyes of those who never saw  
The duke capped with a prince. See then, ye gods,  
The duke turn footman, and his eager dame  
Sink the great lady in the obsequious housemaid !  
Oh, at such moments I could wish the Court  
Had but one breadbasket, that with my fist  
I could make all its windy vanity  
Gasp itself out on the gravel. Fare you well.  
I did not choose my calling ; but at least  
I can refrain from being a gentleman.

LYDIA. You say farewell to me without a pang.

CASHEL. My calling hath apprenticed me to pangs.  
This is a rib-bender ; but I can bear it.  
It is a lonely thing to be a champion.

LYDIA. It is a lonelier thing to be a woman.

CASHEL. Be lonely then. Shall it be said of thee  
That for his brawn thou misalliance mad'st  
Wi' the Prince of Ruffians ? Never. Go thy ways ;  
Or, if thou hast nostalgia of the mud,  
Wed some bedogg'd wretch that on the slot  
Of gilded snobbery, *ventre à terre*,  
Will hunt through life with eager nose on earth  
And hang thee thick with diamonds. I am rich ;  
But all my gold was fought for with my hands.

LYDIA. What dost thou mean by rich ?

CASHEL. There is a man,  
Hight Paradise, vaunted unconquerable,  
Hath dared to say he will be glad to hear from me.  
I have replied that none can hear from me

Until a thousand solid pounds be staked.  
His friends have confidently found the money.  
Ere fall of leaf that money shall be mine ;  
And then I shall possess ten thousand pounds.

I had hoped to tempt thee with that monstrous sum.

LYDIA. Thou silly Cashel, tis but a week's income  
I did propose to give thee three times that  
For pocket money when we two were wed.

CASHEL. Give me my hat. I have been fooling here  
Now, by the Hebrew lawgiver, I thought  
That only in America such revenues  
Were decent deemed. Enough. My dream is dreamed.  
Your gold weighs like a mountain on my chest.  
Farewell.

LYDIA. The golden mountain shall be thine  
The day thou quitst thy horrible profession.

CASHEL. Tempt me not, woman. It is honor calls.  
Slave to the Ring I rest until the face  
Of Paradise be changed.

*Enter BASHVILLE*

BASHVILLE. Madam, your carriage,  
Ordered by you at two. Tis now half-past.

CASHEL. Sdeath ! is it half-past two ? The king ! the  
king !

LYDIA. The king ! What mean you ?

CASHEL. I must meet a monarch  
This very afternoon at Islington.

LYDIA. At Islington ! You must be mad.

CASHEL. A cab !  
Go call a cab ; and let a cab be called ;  
And let the man that calls it be thy footman.

LYDIA. You are not well. You shall not go alone.  
My carriage waits. I must accompany you.  
I go to find my hat.

*Exit.*

CASHEL. Like Paracekus,  
Who went to find his soul. [To BASHVILLE.] And now,  
young man,

How comes it that a fellow of your inches,  
So deft a wrestler and so bold a spirit,  
Can stoop to be a flunkey? Call on me  
On your next evening out. I'll make a man of you.  
Surely you are ambitious and aspire—

BASHVILLE. To be a butler and draw corks; wherefore,  
By Heaven, I will draw yours.

[He hits CASHEL on the nose, and runs out.

CASHEL [thoughtfully putting the side of his forefinger  
to his nose, and studying the blood on it] Too quick  
for me!

There's money in this youth.

Re-enter LYDIA, hatted and gloved

LYDIA. O Heaven! you bleed.

CASHEL. Lend me a key or other frigid object,  
That I may put it down my back, and staunch  
The welling life stream.

LYDIA [giving him her keys] Oh, what have you  
done?

CASHEL. Flush on the boko napped your footman's  
left.

LYDIA. I do not understand.

CASHEL. True. Pardon me.  
I have received a blow upon the nose  
In sport from Bashville. Next, ablution; else  
I shall be total gules. [He hurries out.

LYDIA. How well he speaks!  
There is a silver trumpet in his lips  
That stirs me to the finger ends. His nose  
Dropt lovely color: tis a perfect blood.  
I would twere mingled with mine own!

*Enter BASHVILLE*

What now?

BASHVILLE. Madam, the coachman can no longer wait.  
The horses will take cold.

LYDIA. I do beseech him  
A moment's grace. Oh, mockery of wealth !  
The third class passenger unhidden rides  
Whither and when he will : obsequious trams  
Await him hourly : subterranean tubes  
With tireless coursers whisk him through the town ;  
But we, the rich, are slaves to Houyhnhnms :  
We wait upon their colds, and frowst all day  
Indoors, if they but cough or spurn their hay.

BASHVILLE. Madam, an omnibus to Euston Road,  
And thence r' th' Angel—

*Enter CASHEL*

LYDIA. Let us haste, my love :  
The coachman is impatient.

CASHEL. Did he guess  
He stans for Cashel Byron, he'd outwait  
Pompei's sentinel. Let us away,  
This day of deeds, as yet but half begun,  
Must ended be in merrie Islington.

[*Exeunt LYDIA and CASHEL.*  
BASHVILLE. Gods ! how she hangs on's arm ! I am  
alone.

Now let me lift the cover from my soul.  
O wasted humbleness ! Deluded diffidence !  
How often have I said, Lie down, poor footman :  
She'll never stoop to thee, rear as thou wilt  
Thy powder to the sky. And now, by Heaven,

She stoops below me ; condescends upon  
This hero of the pothouse, whose exploits,  
Writ in my character from my last place,  
Would damn me into ostlerdom. And yet  
There's an eternal justice in it ; for  
By so much as the ne'er subduéd Indian  
Excels the servile negro, doth this ruffian  
Precedence take of me. "*Ich dien.*" Damnation !  
I serve. My motto should have been, "I scalp."  
And yet I do not bear the yoke for gold.  
Because I love her I have blacked her boots ;  
Because I love her I have cleaned her knives,  
Doing in this the office of a boy,  
Whilst, like the celebrated maid that milks  
And does the meanest chares, I've shared the passions  
Of Cleopatra. It has been my pride  
To give her place the greater altitude  
By lowering mine, and of her dignity  
To be so jealous that my cheek has flamed  
Even at the thought of such a deep disgrace  
As love for such a one as I would be  
For such a one as she ; and now ! and now !  
A prizefighter ! O irony ! O bathos !  
To have made way for this ! Oh, Bashville, Bashville :  
Why hast thou thought so lowly of thyself,  
So heavenly high of her ? Let what will come,  
My love must speak : twas my respect was dumb.

## SCENE II

*The Agricultural Hall in Islington, crowded with spectators. In the arena a throne, with a boxing ring before it. A balcony above on the right, occupied*

by persons of fashion: among others, LYDIA  
LORD WORTHINGTON.

*Flourish. Enter LUCIAN and CETEWAYO, with  
in attendance.*

CETEWAYO. Is this the Hall of Husbandmen?  
LUCIAN.

CETEWAYO. Are these anæmic dogs the English  
people?

LUCIAN. Mislike us not for our complexions,  
The pallid liveries of the pall of smoke  
Belched by the mighty chimneys of our factories,  
And by the million patent kitchen ranges  
Of happy English homes.

CETEWAYO. When first I came  
I deemed those chimneys the fuliginous altars  
Of some infernal god. I now perceive  
The English dare not look upon the sky.  
They are moles and owls: they call upon the soot  
To cover them.

LUCIAN. You cannot understand  
The greatness of this people, Cetewayo.  
You are a savage, reasoning like a child.  
Each pallid English face conceals a brain  
Whose powers are proven in the works of Newton  
And in the plays of the immortal Shakespear.  
There is not one of all the thousands here  
But, if you placed him naked in the desert,  
Would presently construct a steam engine,  
And lay a cable t' th' Antipodes.

CETEWAYO. Have I been brought a million miles  
To learn how men can lie! Know, Father Web,  
Men become civilized through twin diseases,

Terror and Greed to wit: these two conjoined  
Become the grisly parents of Invention.  
Why does the trembling white with frantic toil  
Of hand and brain produce the magic gun  
That slays a mile off, whilst the manly Zulu  
Dares look his foe i' the face; fights foot to foot;  
Lives in the present; drains the Here and Now;  
Makes life a long reality, and death  
A moment only; whilst your Englishman  
Glares on his burning candle's winding-sheets,  
Counting the steps of his approaching doom,  
And in the murky corners ever sees  
Two horrid shadows, Death and Poverty:  
In the which anguish an unnatural edge  
Comes on his frightened brain, which straight devises  
Strange frauds by which to filch unearned gold,  
Mad crafts by which to slay unfacéd foes,  
Until at last his agonized desire  
Makes possibility its slave. And then—  
Horrible climax! All-undoing spite!—  
Th' importunate clutching of the coward's hand  
From wearied Nature Devastation's secrets  
Doth wrest; when straight the brave black-livered man  
Is blown explosively from off the globe;  
And Death and Dread, with their white-livered slaves  
O'er-run the earth, and through their chattering teeth  
Stammer the words "Survival of the Fittest."  
Enough of this: I came not here to talk.  
Thou sayst thou hast two white-faced ones who dare  
Fight without guns, and spearless, to the death.  
Let them be brought.

LUCIAN. They fight not to the death,  
But under strictest rules: as, for example,  
Half of their persons shall not be attacked;  
Nor shall they suffer blows when they fall down,

Nor stroke of foot at any time. And, further,  
That frequent opportunities of rest  
With succor and refreshment be secured them.

CETEWAYO. Ye gods, what cowards! Zululand, my  
Zululand:

Personified Pusillanimity  
Hath taen thee from the bravest of the brave!

LUCIAN. Lo the rude savage whose untutored mind  
Cannot perceive self-evidence, and doubts  
That Brave and English mean the self-same thing!

CETEWAYO. Well, well, produce these heroes. I sur-  
mize

They will be carried by their nurses, lest  
Some barking dog or bumbling bee should scare them.

CETEWAYO takes his state. Enter PARADISE

LYDIA. What hateful wretch is this whose mighty  
thews

Presage destruction to his adversaries.

LORD WORTHINGTON. Tis Paradise,

LYDIA. He of whom Cashel spoke?  
A dreadful thought ices my heart. Oh, why  
Did Cashel leave us at the door?

Enter CASHEL

LORD WORTHINGTON.  
The champion comes.

Behold!

LYDIA. Oh, I could kiss him now  
Here, before all the world. His boxing things  
Render him most attractive. But I fear  
Yon villain's fists may maul him.

WORTHINGTON. Have no fear.  
Hark! the king speaks.

CETEWAYO. Ye sons of the white queen :  
Tell me your names and deeds ere ye fall to.

PARADISE. Your royal highness, you beholds a bloke  
What gets his living honest by his fists.  
I may not have the polish of some toffs  
As I could mention on ; but up to now  
No man has took my number down. I scale  
Close on twelve stun ; my age is twenty-three ;  
And at Bill Richardson's Blue Anchor pub  
Am to be heard of any day by such  
As likes the job. I dont know, governor,  
As ennythink remains for me to say.

CETEWAYO. Six wives and thirty oxen shalt thou have  
If on the sand thou leave thy foeman dead.  
Methinks he looks full scornfully on thee.

[To CASHEL] Hal dost thou not so ?

CASHEL. Sir, I do beseech you  
To name the bone, or limb, or special place  
Where you would have me hit him with this fist.

CETEWAYO. Thou hast a noble brow ; but much I  
fear

Thine adversary will disfigure it.

CASHEL. There's a divinity that shapes our ends  
Rough hew them how we will. Give me the gloves.

THE MASTER OF THE REVELS. Paradise, a professor.

Cashel Byron,

Ako professor. Time !

[They spar.

LYDIA. Eternity  
It seems to me until this fight be done.

CASHEL. Dread monarch : this is called the upper  
cut,  
And this a hook-hit of mine own invention.  
The hollow region where I plant this blow  
Is called the mark. My left, you will observe,  
I chiefly use for long shots : with my right

Aiming beside the angle of the jaw  
 And landing with a certain delicate screw  
 I without violence knock my foeman out.  
 Mark how he falls forward upon his face !  
 The rules allow ten seconds to get up ;  
 And as the man is still quite silly, I  
 Might safely finish him ; but my respect  
 For your most gracious majesty's desire  
 To see some further triumphs of the science  
 Of self-defence postpones awhile his doom.

PARADISE. How can a bloke do hisself proper justice  
 With pillows on his fists ?

[He tears off his gloves and attacks CASHEL  
 with his bare knuckles.

THE CROWD. Unfair ! The rules !

CETEWAYO. The joy of battle surges boiling up  
 And bids me join the merray. Isandhlana  
 And Victory ! [He falls on the bystanders

THE CHIEFS. Victory and Isandhlana !

[They run amok. General panic and stampede.  
 The ring is swept away.

LUCIAN. Forbear these most irregular proceedings.  
 Police ! Police !

[He engages CETEWAYO with his umbrella. The balcony  
 comes down with a crash. Screams from its occupants.  
 Indescribable confusion.

CASHEL [dragging LYDIA from the struggling heap] My  
 love, my love, art hurt ?

LYDIA. No, no ; but save my sore overmatched cousin.

A POLICEMAN. Give us a lead, sir. Save the English  
 flag.

Africa tramples on it.

CASHEL. Africa !

Not all the continents whose mighty shoulders  
 The dancing diamonds of the seas bedeck

Shall trample on the blue with spots of white.

Now, Lydia, mark thy lover. [He charges the Zulus.

LYDIA.

Hercules

Cannot withstand him. See : the king is down ;

The tallest chief is up, heels over head,

Tossed corklike o'er my Cashel's sinewy back ;

And his lieutenant all deflated gasps

For breath upon the sand. The others fly

In vain : his fist o'er magic distances

Like a chameleon's tongue shoots to its mark ;

And the last African upon his knees

Sues piteously for quarter. [Rushing into CASHEL's arms]

Oh, my hero :

Thoust saved us all this day.

CASHEL. Twas all for thee.

CETEWAYO [trying to rise] Have I been struck by lightning?

LUCIAN.

Sir, your conduct

Can only be described as most ungentlemanly.

POLICEMAN. One of the prone is white.

CASHEL.

Tis Paradise.

POLICEMAN. He's choking : he has something in his mouth.

LYDIA [to CASHEL] Oh Heaven ! there is blood upon your hip.

You're hurt.

CASHEL. The morsel in yon wretch's mouth  
Was bitten out of me.

[Sensation. LYDIA screams and swoons in CASHEL's arms.

## ACT III

*Whistleton. A room in the Warren Lodge*

*LYDIA at her writing table*

LYDIA. O Past and Present, how ye do conflict  
As here I sit writing my father's life !  
The autumn woodland woos me from without  
With whispering of leaves and dainty airs  
To leave this fruitless haunting of the past.  
My father was a very learnéd man.  
I sometimes think I shall oldmaided be  
Ere I unlearn the things he taught to me.

*Enter POLICEMAN*

POLICEMAN. Asking your ladyship to pardon me  
For this intrusion, might I be so bold  
As ask a question of your people here  
Concerning the Queen's peace ?

LYDIA. My people here  
Are but a footman and a simple maid ;  
And both have craved a holiday to join  
Some local festival. But, sir, your helmet  
Proclaims the Metropolitan Police.

POLICEMAN. Madam, it does ; and I may now inform  
you  
That what you term a local festival  
Is a most hideous outrage against the law,  
Which we to quell from London have come down :

In short, a prizefight. My sole purpose here  
Is to inquire whether your ladyship  
Any bad characters this afternoon  
Has noted in the neighborhood.

LYDIA. No, none, sir.  
I had not let my maid go forth to-day  
Thought I the roads unsafe.

POLICEMAN. Fear nothing, madam :  
The force protects the fair. My mission here  
Is to wreak ution for the broken law.  
I wish your ladyship good afternoon.

LYDIA. Good afternoon. [Exit POLICEMAN.  
A prizefight ! O my heart !  
CASHEL : hast thou deceived me ? Can it be  
Thou hast backslidden to the hateful calling  
I asked thee to eschew ?

O wretched maid,  
Why didst thou flee from London to this place  
To write thy father's life, whenas in town  
Thou mightst have kept a guardian eye on him--  
Whats that ? A flying footstep--

*Enter CASHEL*

CASHEL. Sanctuary !  
The law is on my track. What ! Lydia here !

LYDIA. Ay : Lydia here. Hast thou done murder,  
then,  
That in so horrible a guise thou comest ?

CASHEL. Murder ! I would I had. Yon cannibal  
Hath forty thousand lives ; and I have taen  
But thousands thirty-nine. I tell thee, Lydia,  
On the impenetrable sarcolobe  
That holds his seedling brain these fists have pounded

By Shrewsb'ry clock an hour. This bruised grass  
And caked mud adhering to my form  
I have acquired in rolling on the sod  
Cinched in his grip. This scanty reefer coat  
For decency snatched up as fast I fled  
When the police arrived, belongs to Mellish.  
Tis all too short ; hence my display of rib  
And forearm mother-naked. Be not wroth  
Because I seem to wink at you : by Heaven,  
Twas Paradise that plugged me in the eye  
Which I perforce keep closing. Pity me,  
My training wasted and my blows unpaid,  
Sans stakes, sans victory, sans everything  
I had hoped to win. Oh, I could sit me down  
And weep for bitterness.

CASHEL Begone!

LYDIA. I say begone. Oh, tiger's  
Wrapped in a young man's hide, canst thou not lie  
In love with Nature and at peace with Man?  
Must thou, although thy hands were never made  
To blacken other's eyes, still batter at  
The image of Divinity? I loathe thee.  
Hence from my house and never see me more.

CASHEL. I go. The meanest lad on thy estate  
Would not betray me thus. But tis no matter.

[He opens it  
Ha! the police. I'm lost. [He shuts the door  
Now shalt thou see  
My last fight fought. Exhausted as I am,  
To capture me will cost the coppers dear.  
Come one, come all !

LYDIA. Oh, hide thee, I implore:  
I cannot see thee hunted down like this.  
There is my room. Conceal thyself therein.

Quick, I command. [He goes into the room.

With horror I foresee,  
Lydia, that never lied, must lie for thee.

*Enter POLICEMAN, with PARADISE and MELLISH in custody, BASHVILLE, constables, and others*

POLICEMAN. Keep back your bruised prisoner lest he shock

This wellbred lady's nerves. Your pardon, maam ;  
But have you seen by chance the other one ?  
In this direction he was seen to run.

LYDIA. A man came here anon with bloody hands  
And aspect that did turn my soul to snow.

POLICEMAN. Twas he. What said he ?

LYDIA. Begged for sanctuary.  
I bade the man begone.

POLICEMAN. Most properly.  
Saw you which way he went ?

LYDIA. I cannot tell.

PARADISE. He seen me coming ; and he done a bunk.

POLICEMAN. Peace, there. Excuse his damaged features, lady :

He's Paradise ; and this one's Byron's trainer,  
Mellish.

MELLISH. Injurious copper, in thy teeth  
I hurl the lie. I am no trainer, I.  
My father, a respected missionary,  
Apprenticed me at fourteen years of age  
To the poetry writing. To these woods I came  
With Nature to commune. My revery  
Was by a sound of blows rudely dispelled.  
Mindful of what my sainted parent taught

I rushed to play the peacemaker, when lo !  
These minions of the law laid hands on me.

BASHVILLE. A lovely woman, with distracted cries,  
In most resplendent fashionable frock,  
Approaches like a wounded antelope.

*Enter ADELAIDE GISBORNE*

ADELAIDE. Where is my Cashel ? Hath he been  
arrested ?

POLICEMAN. I would I had thy Cashel by the collar :  
He hath escaped me.

ADELAIDE. Praises be for ever !

LYDIA. Why dost thou call the missing man thy  
Cashel ?

ADELAIDE. He is mine only son.

ALL. Thy son !

ADELAIDE. My son.

LYDIA. I thought his mother hardly would have  
known him,

So crushed his countenance.

ADELAIDE. A ribald peer,  
Lord Worthington by name, this morning came  
With honeyed words beseeching me to mount  
His four-in-hand, and to the country hie  
To see some English sport. Being by nature  
Frank as a child, I fell into the snare,  
But took so long to dress that the design  
Failed of its full effect ; for not until  
The final round we reached the horrid scene.  
Be silent all ; for now I do approach  
My tragedy's catastrophe. Know, then,  
That Heaven did bless me with an only son,  
A boy devoted to his doting mother——

POLICEMAN. Hark ! did you hear an oath from yonder room ?

ADELAIDE. Respect a broken-hearted mother's grief,  
And do not interrupt me in my scene.  
Ten years ago my darling disappeared  
(Ten dreary twelvemonths of continuous tears,  
Tears that have left me prematurely aged ;  
For I am younger far than I appear).  
Judge of my anguish when to-day I saw  
Stripped to the waist, and fighting like a demon  
With one who, whatsoe'er his humble virtues,  
Was clearly not a gentleman, my son !

ALL. O strange event ! O passing tearful tale !

ADELAIDE. I thank you from the bottom of my heart  
For the reception you have given my woe ;  
And now I ask, where is my wretched son ?  
He must at once come home with me, and quit  
A course of life that cannot be allowed.

*Enter CASHEL*

CASHEL. Policeman : I do yield me to the law.

LYDIA. Oh no.

ADELAIDE. My son !

CASHEL. My mother ! Do not kiss me.  
My visage is too sore.

POLICEMAN. The lady hid him.  
This is a regular plant. You cannot be  
Up to that sex. [To CASHEL] You come along with  
me.

LYDIA. Fear not, my Cashel : I will bail thee out.

CASHEL. Never. I do embrace my doom with joy.  
With Paradise in Pentonville or Portland  
I shall feel safe : there are no mothers there.

ADELAIDE. Ungracious boy—

CASHEL.

Constable: bear me h-

MELLISH. Oh, let me sweetest reconciliation make  
By calling to thy mind that moving song:—

[Sings] They say there is no other—

CASHEL. Forbear at once, or the next note of mine  
That falls upon thine ear shall clang in thunder  
From the last trumpet.ADELAIDE. A disgraceful threat  
To level at this virtuous old man.LYDIA. Oh, Cashel, if thou scornst thy mother:  
How wilt thou treat thy wife?CASHEL. There spake my f—  
I knew you would say that. Oh, mothers, mothers!  
Would you but let your wretched sons alone  
Life were worth living! Had I any choice  
In this importunate relationship?  
None. And until that high auspicious day  
When the millennium on an orphaned world  
Shall dawn, and man upon his fellow look,  
Reckless of consanguinity, my mother  
And I within the self-same hemisphere  
Conjointly may not dwell.

ADELAIDE. Ungentlemanly!

CASHEL. I am no gentleman. I am a criminal  
Redhanded, baseborn—ADELAIDE. Baseborn! Who dares!  
Thou art the son and heir of Bingley Bumpkin  
FitzAlgernon de Courcy Cashel Byron,  
Sire of Park Lane and Overlord of Dorset,  
Who after three months wedded happiness  
Rashly fordid himself with prussic acid,  
Leaving a tearstained note to testify  
That having sweetly honeymooned with me,  
He now could say, O Death, where is thy sting?

POLICEMAN. Sir: had I known your quality, this cop  
I had averted; but it is too late.  
The law's above us both.

*Enter LUCIAN, with an Order in Council*

LUCIAN. Not so, policeman.  
I bear a message from The Throne itself  
Of fullest amnesty for Byron's past.  
Nay, more: of Dorset deputy lieutenant  
He is proclaimed. Further, it is decreed,  
In memory of his glorious victory  
Over our country's foes at Islington,  
The flag of England shall for ever bear  
On azure field twelve swanlike spots of white;  
And by an exercise of feudal right  
Too long disused in this anarchic age  
Our sovereign doth confer on him the hand  
Of Miss Carew, Wiltscoken's wealthy heiress.

*[General acclamation.]*

POLICEMAN. Was anything, sir, said about me?  
LUCIAN. Thy faithful services are not forgot:  
In future call thyself Inspector Smith.

*[Renewed acclamation.]*

POLICEMAN. I thank you, sir. I thank you, gentlemen.  
LUCIAN. My former opposition, valiant champion,  
Was based on the supposed discrepancy  
Betwixt your rank and Lydia's. Here's my hand.

BASHVILLE. And I do here unselfishly renounce  
All my pretensions to my lady's favor. *[Sensation.]*

LYDIA. What, Bashville! didst thou love me?  
BASHVILLE. Madam: yes.

Tis said: now let me leave immediately.

LYDIA. In taking, Bashville, this most tasteful course  
You are but acting as a gentleman

In the like case would act. I fully grant  
 Your perfect right to make a declaration  
 Which flatters me and honors your ambition.  
 Prior attachment bids me firmly say  
 That whilst my Cashel lives, and polyandry  
 Rests foreign to the British social scheme,  
 Your love is hopeless ; still, your services,  
 Made zealous by disinterested passion,  
 Would greatly add to my domestic comfort ;  
 And if—

CASHEL. Excuse me. I have other views.  
 I've noted in this man such aptitude  
 For art and exercise in his defence  
 That I prognosticate for him a future  
 More glorious than my past. Henceforth I dub him  
 The Admirable Bashville, Byron's Novice ;  
 And to the utmost of my mended fortunes  
 Will back him gainst the world at ten stone six.

ALL. Hail, Byron's Novice, champion that shall be !  
 BASHVILLE. Must I renounce my lovely lady's service  
 And mar the face of man ?

CASHEL. Tis Fate's decree.  
 For know, rash youth, that in this star crost world  
 Fate drives us all to find our chiefest good  
 In what we can, and not in what we would.

POLICEMAN. A post-horn—hark !

CASHEL. What noise of wheels is this

LORD WORTHINGTON *drives upon the scene in his four-in-hand, and descends*

ADELAIDE. Perfidious peer !

LORD WORTHINGTON. Sweet Adelaide—

ADELAIDE. Forbes

Audacious one : my name is Mrs. Byron.

LORD WORTHINGTON. Oh, change that title for the  
sweeter one  
Of Lady Worthington.

CASHEL. Unhappy man,  
You know not what you do.

LYDIA. Nay, tis a match  
Of most auspicious promise. Dear Lord Worthington,  
You tear from us our mother-in-law—

CASHEL. Ha! True.  
LYDIA. —but we will make the sacrifice. She blushes :  
At least she very prettily produces  
Blushing's effect.

ADELAIDE. My lord : I do accept you.  
[They embrace. *Rejoicings.*]

CASHEL [aside] It wrings my heart to see my noble  
backer  
Lay waste his future thus. The world's a chessboard,  
And we the merest pawns in fist of Fate.

[*Aloud*] And now, my friends, gentle and simple both,  
Our scene draws to a close. In lawful course  
As Dorset's deputy lieutenant I  
Do pardon all concerned this afternoon  
In the late gross and brutal exhibition  
Of miscalled sport.

LYDIA [throwing herself into his arms] Your boats are  
burnt at last.

CASHEL. This is the face that burnt a thousand boats,  
And ravished Cashel Byron from the ring.  
But to conclude. Let William Paradise  
Devote himself to science, and acquire,  
By studying the player's speech in Hamlet,  
A more refined address. You, Robert Mellish,  
To the Blue Anchor hostelry attend him ;  
Assuage his hurts, and bid Bill Richardson  
Limit his access to the fatal tap.

Now mount we on my backer's four-in-hand,  
And to St. George's Church, whose portico  
Hanover Square shuts off from Conduit Street,  
Repair we all. Strike up the wedding march ;  
And, Mellish, let thy melodies trill forth  
Broad o'er the wold as fast we bowl along.  
Give me the post-horn. Loose the flowing rein ;  
And up to London drive with might and main.

[ *Exeunt.* ]

## PRESS CUTTINGS

A TOPICAL SKETCH COMPILED FROM  
THE EDITORIAL AND CORRESPONDENCE  
COLUMNS OF THE DAILY PAPERS DURING  
THE WOMEN'S WAR IN 1959

By direction of the Lord Chamberlain the General and the Prime Minister in this play must in all public performances of it be addressed and described as General Bones and Mr Johnson, and by no means as General Mitchener and Mr Balsquith. The allusions to commoner persons are allowed to stand as they are.

General Mitchener, by the way, is not the late Lord Kitchener, but an earlier and more highly connected commander. Balsquith (Balfour-Asquith) is obviously neither of these statesmen, and cannot in the course of nature be both.

## PRESS CUTTINGS

*The forenoon of the first of April, three years hence.*

General Mittenener is at his writing-table in the War Office, opening letters. On his left is the fireplace with a fire burning. On his right, against the opposite wall, is a staring desk with an office stool. The desk is in the wall forming a sort, rather, way between the table and the desk. The table is not quite in the middle of the room: it is nearer to the rear rug than to the desk. There is a chair at each end of it for persons having business with the General. There is a telephone on the table.

Long silence.

A VOICE FROM THE STREET. Votes for Women!

The General starts convulsively; snatches a revolver from a drawer; and listens in an agony of apprehension. Nothing happens. He puts the revolver back, ashamed; wipes his brows; and resumes his work. He is startled afresh by the entry of an Orderly. This Orderly is an unsoldierly, skeevish, discontented young man.

MITCHENER. Oh, it's only you. Well?

THE ORDERLY. Another one, sir. She's chained herself.

MITCHENER. Chained herself? How? To what? We've taken away the railings and everything that a chain can be passed through.

THE ORDERLY. We forgot the door-scraper, sir. She lay down on the flags and got the chain through before she started hollerin. She's lyin there now; and she downfaces

us that youve got the key of the padlock in a letter in a buff envelope, and that youll see her when you open it.

MITCHENER. She's mad. Have the scraper dug up and let her go home with it hanging round her neck.

THE ORDERLY. There is a buff envelope there, sir.

MITCHENER. Youre all afraid of these women. [He picks the letter up] It does seem to have a key in it. [He opens the letter; takes out a key and a note; and reads] 'Dear Mitch'—Well, I'm dashed!

THE ORDERLY. Yes, sir.

MITCHENER. What do you mean by Yes, sir?

THE ORDERLY. Well, you said you was dashed, sir; and you did look—if youll excuse my saying it, sir—well, you looked it.

MITCHENER [who has been reading the letter, and is too astonished to attend to the Orderly's reply] This is a letter from the Prime Minister asking me to release the woman with this key if she padlocks herself, and to have her shewn up and see her at once.

THE ORDERLY [tremulously] Dont do it, governor.

MITCHENER [angrily] How often have I ordered you not to address me as governor? Remember that you are a soldier and not a vulgar civilian. Remember also that when a man enters the army he leaves fear behind him. Heres the key. Unlock her and shew her up.

THE ORDERLY. Me unlock her! I dursent. Lord knows what she'd do to me.

MITCHENER [pepperily, rising] Obey your orders instantly, sir; and dont presume to argue. Even if she kills you, it is your duty to die for your country. Right about face. March.

*The Orderly goes out, trembling.*

THE VOICE OUTSIDE. Votes for Women! Votes for Women! Votes for Women!

MITCHENER [mimicking her] Votes for Women! Votes for Women! Votes for Women! [In his natural voice] Votes

or chidden. Votes or none. Vote for me always. [He casts himself on the rearresting and awaits the energy].

THE ORDERLY [outside] In you go. [He pats a passing Suffraget into the room] The person, sir. [He withdraws].

The Suffraget takes off her tailor-made skirt and reveals a pair of fashionable trousers.

MITCHENER [terrified] Stop, madam. What are you doing? You must not undress in my presence. I protest. Not even your letter from the Prime Minister—

THE SUFFRAGET. My dear Mitchener; I am the Prime Minister. [He takes off his hat and coat; strips off his trousers; and confronts the General in the ordinary costume of a Cabinet Minister].

MITCHENER. Good heavens! Balsquith!

BALSQUITH [turning himself into Mitchener's chair] Yes: it is indeed Balsquith. It has come to this: that the only way the Prime Minister of England can get from Downing Street to the War Office is by assuming this disguise; shrieking "VOTES FOR WOMEN"; and chaining himself to your door-scraper. They were at the corner in force. They cheered me. Bellachristina herself was there. She shook my hand and told me to say I was a vegetarian, as the diet was better in Holloway for vegetarians.

MITCHENER. Why didn't you telephone?

BALSQUITH. They tap the telephone. Every switchboard in London is in their hands, or in those of their young men.

MITCHENER. Where on earth did you get the dress? I hope it's not a French dress!

BALSQUITH. Great heavens, no. We're not allowed even to put on our gloves with French chalk. Everything's labelled "Made in Camberwell."

MITCHENER. As a Tariff Reformer, I must say Quite right. [Balsquith has a strong controversial impulse and is evidently going to dispute this profession of faith.] No matter. Don't argue. What have you come for?

BALSQUITH. Sandstone has resigned.

## Press Cuttings

MITCHENER [amazed] Old Red resigned!  
BALSQUITH. Resigned.

MITCHENER. But how? Why? Oh, impossible! the proclamation of martial law last Tuesday made Sandstone virtually Dictator in the metropolis; and to resign now is flat desertion.

BALSQUITH. Yes, yes, my dear Mitchener: I know all that as well as you do: I argued with him until I was black in the face, and he so red about the neck that if I had gone on he would have burst. He is furious because we have abandoned his plan.

MITCHENER. But you accepted it unconditionally.

BALSQUITH. Yes, before we knew what it was. It was unworkable, you know.

MITCHENER. I don't know. Why is it unworkable?

BALSQUITH. I mean the part about drawing a cordon round Westminster at a distance of two miles, and turning all women out of it.

MITCHENER. A masterpiece of strategy. Let me explain. The Suffragets are a very small body; but they are numerous enough to be troublesome—even dangerous—when they are all concentrated in one place—say in Parliament Square. But by making a two-mile radius and pushing them beyond it, you scatter their attack over a circular line twelve miles long. Just what Wellington would have done.

BALSQUITH. But the women won't go.

MITCHENER. Nonsense: they must go.

BALSQUITH. They won't.

MITCHENER. What does Sandstone say?

BALSQUITH. He says: Shoot them down.

MITCHENER. Of course.

BALSQUITH. You're not serious?

MITCHENER. I'm perfectly serious.

BALSQUITH. But you can't shoot them down! Women, you know!

MITCHENER [grinning confidently] Yes you can. Strange

as .. may seem to you as a c.v...a.. But suppose you point a rifle at a woman and fire it, she will drop exactly as a man drops.

BALSQUITH. But suppose your own daughters—Helen and Georgina—

MITCHENER. My daughters would not dream of disobeying the proclamation. [As an afterthought] At least Helen wouldn't.

BALSQUITH. But Georgina?

MITCHENER. Georgina would if she knew she'd be shot if she didn't. That's how the thing would work. Military methods are really the most merciful in the end. You keep sending these misguided women to Holloway and killing them slowly and inhumanly by ruining their health; and it does no good; they go on worse than ever. Shoot a few, promptly and humanely; and there will be an end at once of all resistance and of all the suffering that resistance entails.

BALSQUITH. But public opinion would never stand it.

MITCHENER [walking about and laying down the law] There's no such thing as public opinion.

BALSQUITH. No such thing as public opinion?

MITCHENER. Absolutely no such thing. There are certain persons who entertain certain opinions. Well, shoot them down. When you have shot them down, there are no longer any persons entertaining those opinions alive; consequently there is no longer any more of the public opinion you are so much afraid of. Grasp that fact, my dear Balsquith; and you have grasped the secret of government. Public opinion is mind. Mind is inseparable from matter. Shoot down the matter and you kill the mind.

BALSQUITH. But hang it all—

MITCHENER [insolentally] No I won't hang it all. It's no use coming to me and talking about public opinion. You have put yourself into the hands of the army; and you are committed to military methods. And the basis of all

BALQUITH. military methods is that when people wont do what they're told to do, you shoot them down.

MITCHENER. Oh yes; it's all jolly fine for you and Old Red. You dont depend on votes for your places. What do you suppose would happen at the next election?

MITCHENER. Have no next election. Bring in a Bill at once repealing all the Reform Acts and vesting the Government in a properly trained magistracy responsible only to a Council of War. It answers perfectly in India. If anyone objects, shoot him down.

BALQUITH. But none of the members of my party would be on the Council of War. Neither should I. Do you expect us to vote for making ourselves nobodies?

MITCHENER. Youll have to, sooner or later, or the Socialists will make nobodies of the lot of you by collaring every penny you possess. Do you suppose this damned democracy can be allowed to go on now that the mob is beginning to take it seriously and using its power to lay hands on property? Parliament must abolish itself. The Irish parliament voted for its own extinction. The English parliament will do the same if the same means are taken to persuade it.

BALQUITH. That would cost a lot of money.

MITCHENER. Not money necessarily. Bribe them with titles.

BALQUITH. Do you think we dare?

MITCHENER [scornfully] Dare! Dare! What is life but daring, man? "To dare, to dare, and again to dare—"

FEMALE VOICE IN THE STREET. Votes for Women! [Mitchener, revolver in hand, rushes to the door and locks it. Balquith hides under the table]. Votes for Women!

*A shot is heard.*

BALQUITH [emerging in the greatest alarm] Good heavens, you havnt given orders to fire on them: have you?

MITCHENER. No; but it's a sentinel's duty to fire on anyone who persists in attempting to pass without giving the word.

BALSQUITH [Laughing - *very* *loudly*] There's many business is  
really awful.

MITCHENER. Be calm, Balsquith. These things must  
happen: they save bloodshed in the long run, believe me.  
I've seen plenty of it; and I know.

BALSQUITH. I haven't; and I don't know. I wish those guns  
didn't make such a devil of a noise. We must adopt Maxim's  
Silencer for the army rifles if we're going to shoot women.  
I really couldn't stand hearing it. [Sentries outside tried to  
open the door and then knocked.] What's that?

MITCHENER. Who's there?

THE ORDERLY. It's only me, governor. It's all right.

MITCHENER [unlocking the door and admitting the Orderly,  
who comes between them] What was it?

THE ORDERLY. Suffraget, sir.

BALSQUITH. Did the sentry shoot her?

THE ORDERLY. No, sir: she shot the sentry.

BALSQUITH [relieved] Oh: is that all?

MITCHENER [most indignantly] All! A civilian shoots down  
one of His Majesty's soldiers on duty; and the Prime  
Minister of England asks, Is that all?!!! Have you no  
regard for the sanctity of human life?

BALSQUITH [much relieved] Well, getting shot is what a  
soldier is for. Besides, he doesn't vote.

MITCHENER. Neither do the Suffragets.

BALSQUITH. Their husbands do. [To the Orderly] Did she  
kill him?

THE ORDERLY. No, sir. He got a stinger on his trousers,  
sir, but it didn't penetrate. He lost his temper a bit and  
put down his gun and clouted her head for her. So she  
said he was no gentleman; and we let her go, thinking  
she'd had enough, sir.

MITCHENER [groaning] Clouted her head! These women  
are making the army as lawless as themselves. Clouted her  
head indeed! A purely civil procedure.

THE ORDERLY. Any orders, sir?

MITCHENER. No. Yes. No. Yes: send everybody who

took part in this disgraceful scene to the guard-room. No. I'll address the men on the subject after lunch. Parade them for that purpose: full kit. Don't grin at me, sir. Right about face. March.

*The Orderly obeys and goes out.*

BALSQUITH [taking Mitchener affectionately by the arm and walking in persuasively to end frs] And now, Mitchener, will you come to the rescue of the Government and take the command that Old Red has thrown up?

MITCHENER. How can I? You know that the people are devoted heart and soul to Sandstone. He is only bringing you "on the knee," as we say in the army. Could any other living man have persuaded the British nation to accept universal compulsory military service as he did last year? Why, even the Church refused exemption. He is supreme—omnipotent.

BALSQUITH. He was, a year ago. But ever since your book of reminiscences went into two more editions than his, and the rush for it led to the wrecking of the Times Book Club, you have become to all intents and purposes his senior. He lost ground by saying that the wrecking was set up by the booksellers. It shewed jealousy; and the public felt it.

MITCHENER. But I cracked him up in my book—you see I could do no less after the handsome way he cracked me up in his—and I can't go back on it now. [Breaking loose from Balsquith] No: it's no use, Balsquith: he can dictate his terms to you.

BALSQUITH. Not a bit of it. That affair of the curate—

MITCHENER [impatiently] Oh, damn that curate. I've heard of nothing but that wretched mutineer for a fortnight past. He's not a curate: whilst he's serving in the army he's a private soldier and nothing else. I really havn't time to discuss him further. I'm busy. Good morning. [He sits down at his table and takes up his letters].

BALSQUITH [near the door] I'm sorry you take that tone, Mitchener. Since you do take it, let me tell you frankly that

I am L e a r Chub Je      1      ~~.....~~  
of consideration for the Government in giving an unreason-  
able and unpopular order, and bringing compulsory military  
service into disrepute.

MITCHENER. No order is unreasonable, and all orders are  
unpopular.

BALSQUTH. When the leader of the Labor Party appealed  
to me and to the House last year not to throw away all the  
liberties of Englishmen by accepting compulsory military  
service without full civil rights for the soldier—

MITCHENER. Rot.

BALSQUTH. —I said that no British officer would be  
capable of abusing the authority with which it was absolutely  
necessary to invest him.

MITCHENER. Quite right.

BALSQUTH. That carried the House;—

MITCHENER. Naturally.

BALSQUTH. —and the feeling was that the Labor Party  
were soulless cads.

MITCHENER. So they are.

BALSQUTH. And now comes this unmannishly young whelp  
Chubbs-Jenkinson, the only son of what they call a sold-  
king, and orders a curate to lick his boots. And when the  
curate punches his head, you first sentence him to be shot,  
and then make a great show of clemency by commuting it  
to a flogging. What did you expect the curate to do?

MITCHENER [*throwing down his pen and his letters and jumping up to confront Balsquith*] His duty was perfectly simple.  
He should have obeyed the order; and then laid his com-  
plaint against the officer in proper form. He would have  
received the fullest satisfaction.

BALSQUTH. What satisfaction?

MITCHENER. Chubbs-Jenkinson would have been repre-  
manded. In fact, he was reprimanded. Besides, the man  
was thoroughly insubordinate. You can't deny that the very  
first thing he did when they took him down after flogging  
him was to walk up to Chubbs-Jenkinson and break his jaw.

That shewed there was no use flogging him; so now he will get two years' hard labor; and serve him right!

BALSQUITH. I bet you a guinea he wont get even a week. I bet you another that Chubbs-Jenkinson apologizes abjectly. You evidently havnt heard the news.

MITCHENER. What news?

BALSQUITH. It turns out that the curate is well connected. [Mitchener staggers at the shock. He runs into his chair and buries his face in his hands over the bluster.] He has three aunts in the peerage; Lady Richmond's one of them [Mitchener punctuates these announcements with reverberating groans]; and they all adore him. The invitations for six garden parties and fourteen dances have been cancelled for all the subalterns in Chubbs's regiment. [Mitchener attempts to snoot himself].

BALSQUITH [seizing the pistol] No: your country needs you, Mitchener.

MITCHENER [putting down the pistol] For my country's sake. [Balsquith, reassured, sits down]. But what an infernal young fool Chubbs-Jenkinson is, not to know the standing of his man better! Why didnt he know? It was his business to know. He ought to be flogged.

BALSQUITH. Probably he will be, by the other subalterns.

MITCHENER. I hope so. Anyhow, out he goes. Out of the army. He or I.

BALSQUITH. Steady, steady. His father has subscribed a million to the party funds. We owe him a peerage.

MITCHENER. I dont care.

BALSQUITH. I do. How do you think parties are kept up? Not by the subscriptions of the local associations, I hope. They dont pay for the gas at the meetings.

MITCHENER. Man: can you not be serious? Here are we, face to face with Lady Richmond's grave displeasure; and you talk to me about gas and subscriptions. Her own nephew!!!!

BALSQUITH [gloomily] It's unfortunate. He was at Oxford with Bobby Bessborough.

MITCHENER. Worse and worse. What shall we do?  
A VOICE IN THE STREET. Votes for Women! Votes for  
Women!

*A terrific explosion shakes the building. Then take no notice.*  
MITCHENER [streaking down]. You dont know what this  
means to me, Balsquith. I love the army. I love my country.  
BALSQUITH. It certainly is rather awkward.

*The Orderly comes in.*  
MITCHENER [angrily]. What is it? How dare you inter-  
rupt us like this!

THE ORDERLY. Didn't you hear the explosion, sir?  
MITCHENER. Explosion. What explosion? No: I heard  
no explosion: I have something more serious to attend to  
than explosions. Great heavens! Lady Richmond's nephew  
has been treated like any common laborer; and while Eng-  
land is reeling under the shock, a private walks in and asks  
me if I heard an explosion.

BALSQUITH. By the way, what was the explosion?  
THE ORDERLY. Only a sort of bombshell, sir.  
BALSQUITH. Bombshell!

THE ORDERLY. A pasteboard one, sir. Full of papers with  
Votes for Women in red letters. Fired into the yard from  
the roof of the Alliance Office.

MITCHENER. Pooh! Go away. GO away.  
*The Orderly, bewildered, goes out.*  
BALSQUITH. Mitchener: you can save the country yet.  
Put on your full dress uniform and your medals and orders  
and so forth. Get a guard of honor—something showy—  
horse guards or something of that sort; and call on the old  
girl—

MITCHENER. The old girl?  
BALSQUITH. Well, Lady Richmond. Apologize to her. Ask  
her leave to accept the command. Tell her that youve made  
the curate your adjutant or your aide-de-camp or whatever  
is the proper thing. By the way, what can you make him?

MITCHENER. I might make him my chaplain. I dont see  
why I shouldnt have a chaplain on my staff. He shewed a

very proper spirit in punching that young cub's head. I should have done the same myself.

BALSQUITH. Then I've your promise to take command if Lady Richmond consents?

MITCHENER. On condition that I have a free hand. No nonsense about public opinion or democracy.

BALSQUITH. As far as possible, I think I may say yes.

MITCHENER [*rising intolerantly and going to the hearthrug*] That won't do for me. Don't be weak-kneed, Balsquith. You know perfectly well that the real government of this country is and always must be the government of the masses by the classes. You know that democracy is damned nonsense, and that no class stands less of it than the working class. You know that we are already discussing the steps that will have to be taken if the country should ever be face to face with the possibility of a Labor majority in Parliament. You know that in that case we should disfranchise the mob, and if they made a fuss, shoot them down. You know that if we need public opinion to support us, we can get any quantity of it manufactured in our papers by poor devils of journalists who will sell their souls for five shillings. You know—

BALSQUITH. Stop. Stop, I say. I don't know. That is the difference between your job and mine, Mitchener. After twenty years in the army a man thinks he knows everything. After twenty months in the Cabinet he knows that he knows nothing.

MITCHENER. We learn from history—

BALSQUITH. We learn from history that men never learn anything from history. That's not my own: it's Hegel.

MITCHENER. Who's Hegel?

BALSQUITH. Dead. A German philosopher. [*He half rises, but recollects something and sits down again*]. Oh, confound it, that reminds me. The Germans have laid down four more Dreadnoughts.

MITCHENER. Then you must lay down twelve.

BALSQUITH Oh yes it's easy to say that but think of what they... cos...

MITCHENER. Think of what it would cost to be invaded by Germany and forced to pay an indemnity of five hundred millions.

BALSQUITH. But you said that if you got compulsory military service there would be an end of the danger of invasion.

MITCHENER. On the contrary, my dear fellow, it increases the danger tenfold, because it increases German jealousy of our military supremacy.

BALSQUITH. After all, why should the Germans invade us?

MITCHENER. Why shouldn't they? What else has their army to do? What else are they building a navy for?

BALSQUITH. Well, we never think of invading Germany.

MITCHENER. Yes, we do. I have thought of nothing else for the last ten years. Say what you will, Balsquith, the Germans have never recognized, and until they get a stern lesson they never will recognize, the plain fact that the interests of the British Empire are paramount, and that the command of the sea belongs by nature to England.

BALSQUITH. But if they won't recognize it, what can I do?

MITCHENER. Shoot them down.

BALSQUITH. I can't shoot them down.

MITCHENER. Yes you can. You don't realize it; but if you fire a rifle into a German he drops just as surely as a rabbit does.

BALSQUITH. But dash it all, man, a rabbit hasn't got a rifle and a German has. Suppose he shoots you down.

MITCHENER. Excuse me, Balsquith; but that consideration is what we call cowardice in the army. A soldier always assumes that he is going to shoot, not to be shot.

BALSQUITH [*jumping up and walking about sulkily*] Oh come! I like to hear you military people talking of cowardice. Why, you spend your lives in an ecstasy of terror of imaginary invasions. I don't believe you ever go to bed without looking under it for a burglar.

MITCHENER [*calmly*] A very sensible precaution, Balsquith. I always take it; and, in consequence, I've never been burgled.

BALSQUITH. Neither have I. Anyhow, dont you taunt me with cowardice. [*He posts himself on the hearthrug beside Mitchener, on his left*]. I never look under my bed for a burglar. I'm not always looking under the nation's bed for an invader. And if it comes to fighting, I'm quite willing to fight without being three to one.

MITCHENER. These are the romantic ravings of a Jingo civilian, Balsquith. At least youll not deny that the absolute command of the sea is essential to our security.

BALSQUITH. The absolute command of the sea is essential to the security of the principality of Monaco. But Monaco isn't going to get it.

MITCHENER. And consequently Monaco enjoys no security. What a frightful thing! How do the inhabitants sleep with the possibility of invasion, of bombardment, continually present to their minds? Would you have our English slumbers broken in the same way? Are we also to live without security?

BALSQUITH [*dogmatically*] Yes. Theres no such thing as security in the world; and there never can be as long as men are mortal. England will be secure when England is dead, just as the streets of London will be safe when theres no longer a man in her streets to be run over or a vehicle to run over him. When you military chaps ask for security you are crying for the moon.

MITCHENER [*very seriously*] Let me tell you, Balsquith, that in these days of aeroplanes and Zeppelin airships the question of the moon is becoming one of the greatest importance. It will be reached at no very distant date. Can you, as an Englishman, tamely contemplate the possibility of having to live under a German moon? The British flag must be planted there at all hazards.

BALSQUITH. My dear Mitchener, the moon is outside practical politics. I'd swop it for a coaling-station to

morrow with Germany or any other Power sufficiently military in its way of thinking to attach any importance to it.

MITCHENER [*losing his temper*] You are the friend of every country but your own.

BALSPWITH. Say nobody's enemy but my own. It sounds nicer. You really neednt be so horribly afraid of the other countries. They're all in the same fix as we are. I'm much more interested in the death-rate in Lambeth than in the German fleet.

MITCHENER. You darent say that in Lambeth.

BALSPWITH. I'll say it the day after you publish your scheme for invading Germany and repealing all the Reform Acts.

*The Orderly comes in.*

MITCHENER. What do you want?

THE ORDERLY. I dont want anything, governor, thank you. The secretary and president of the Anti-Suffraget League says they had an appointment with the Prime Minister, and that they've been sent on here from Downing Street.

BALSPWITH [*going to the table*] Quite right. I forgot them. [*To Mitchener*] Would you mind my seeing them here? I feel extraordinarily grateful to these women for standing by us and facing the Suffragets, especially as they are naturally the gentler and timider sort of women. [*The Orderly means*.] Did you say anything?

THE ORDERLY. No, sir.

BALSPWITH. Did you catch their names?

THE ORDERLY. Yes, sir. The president is Lady Corinthia Fanshawe; and the secretary is Mrs Banger.

MITCHENER [*abruptly*] Mrs what?

THE ORDERLY. Mrs Banger.

BALSPWITH. Curious that quiet people always seem to have violent names.

THE ORDERLY. Not much quiet about her, sir.

MITCHENER [*outraged*] Attention! Speak when you're

spoken to. Hold your tongue when you're not. Right about face. March. [*The Orderly obeys*]. That's the way to keep these chaps up to the mark. [*The Orderly returns*]. Back again! What do you mean by this mutiny?

THE ORDERLY. What am I to say to the ladies, sir?

BALSQUITH. You don't mind my seeing them somewhere, do you?

MITCHENER. Not at all. Bring them in to see me when you've done with them. I understand that Lady Corinthia is a very fascinating woman. Who is she, by the way?

BALSQUITH. Daughter of Lord Broadstairs, the automatic turbine man. Gave quarter of a million to the party funds. She's musical and romantic and all that—don't hunt: hates politics: stops in town all the year round: one never sees her except at the opera and at musical at-homes and so forth.

MITCHENER. What a life! [*To the Orderly*] Where are the ladies?

THE ORDERLY. In No. 17, sir.

MITCHENER. Show Mr Balsquith there; and send Mrs Farrell here.

THE ORDERLY [*calling into the corridor*] Mrs Farrell! [*To Balsquith*] This way, sir. [*He goes out with Balsquith*].

Mrs Farrell, a lean, highly respectable Irish charwoman of about fifty, comes in.

MITCHENER. Mrs Farrell: I've a very important visit to pay: I shall want my full dress uniform and all my medals and orders and my presentation sword. There was a time when the British Army contained men capable of discharging these duties for their commanding officer. Those days are over. The compulsorily enlisted soldier runs to a woman for everything. I'm therefore reluctantly obliged to trouble you.

MRS FARRELL. Your meddles n ordhers n the crooked sword widh the ivory handle n your full dress uniform is in the waxworks in the Chamber o Military Glory over in the place they used to call the Banquetin Hall. I told

you would be sorry for sendin them away; and you told me to mind me own business. You're wiser now.

MITCHENER. I am. I had not at that time discovered that you were the only person in the whole military establishment of this capital who could be trusted to remember where anything was, or to understand an order and obey it.

MRS FARRELL. It's no good flattelin me. I'm too old.

MITCHENER. Not at all, Mrs Farrell. How is your daughter?

MRS FARRELL. Which daughter?

MITCHENER. The one who has made such a gratifying success in the Music Halls.

MRS FARRELL. There's no Music Halls nowadays: they're Variety Theatres. She's got an offer of marriage from a young jook.

MITCHENER. Is it possible? What did you do?

MRS FARRELL. I told his mother on him.

MITCHENER. Oh! What did she say?

MRS FARRELL. She was as pleased as Punch. Thank Heaven, she says, he's got somebody that'll be able to keep him when the supertax is put up to twenty shillings in the pound.

MITCHENER. But your daughter herself? What did she say?

MRS FARRELL. Accepted him, of course. What else would a young fool like her do? He introuced her to the Poet Laureate, thinkin she'd inspire him.

MITCHENER. Did she?

MRS FARRELL. Faith, I dunna. All I know is she walked up to him as bold as brass n said, "Write me a sketch, dear." Afther all the trouble I've took with that child's manners she's no more notion how to behave herself than a pig. You'll have to wear General Sandstone's uniform: it's the only one in the place, because he wont lend it to the shows.

MITCHENER. But Sandstone's clothes wont fit me.

MRS FARRELL [unmoved] Then you'll have to fit them. Why shouldn't they fit 'ya as well as they fitted General Blake at the Mansion House?

MITCHENER. They didn't fit him. He looked a frightful guy.

MRS FARRELL. Well, you must do the best you can with them. You can't exhibit your clothes and wear them too.

MITCHENER. And the public thinks the lot of a commanding officer a happy one! Oh, if they could only see the *seamy* side of it. [He returns to his table to resume work].

MRS. FARRELL. If they could only see the *seamy* side o General Sandstone's uniform, where his flask rubs agen the buckle of his braces, theyd tell him he ought to get a new one. Let alone the way he swears at me.

MITCHENER. When a man has risked his life on eight battlefields, Mrs Farrell, he has given sufficient proof of his self-control to be excused a little strong language.

MRS FARRELL. Would you put up with bad language from me because I've risked me life eight times in child-bed?

MITCHENER. My dear Mrs Farrell, you surely would not compare a risk of that harmless domestic kind to the fearful risks of the battlefield.

MRS FARRELL. I wouldn't compare risks run to bear livin people into the world to risks run to blow them out of it. A mother's risk is joory: a soldier's is nothin but divilmint.

MITCHENER [settled] Let me tell you, Mrs Farrell, that if the men did not fight, the women would have to fight themselves. We spare you that at all events.

MRS FARRELL. You can't help yourselves. If three-quarters of you was killed we could replace you with the help of the other quarter. If three-quarters of us was killed how many people would there be in England in another generation? If it wasn't for that, the men'd put the fightin on us just as they put all the other drudgery. What would you do if we was all kilt? Would you go to bed and have twins?

MITCHENER. Really, Mrs Farrell, you must discuss these questions with a medical man. You make me blush, positively.

MRS FARRELL [*grumbling to herself*]. A good job too. If I could have made Farrell blush I wouldnt have had to risk me life so often. You n your risks n your bravery n your self-conthrol indeed! "Why dont you conthrol yourself?" I sez to Farrell. "It's agen me religion," he sez.

MITCHENER [*plaintively*] Mrs Farrell: you're a woman of very powerful mind. I'm not qualified to argue these delicate matters with you. I ask you to spare me, and to be good enough to take these clothes to Mr Balsquith when the ladies leave.

*The Orderly comes in.*

THE ORDERLY. Lady Corinthia Fanshawe and Mrs Banger want to see you, sir. Mr Balsquith told me to tell you.

MRS FARRELL. They've come about the vote. I don't know whether it's dhem dhat want it or dhem dhat doesn't want it: anyhow, they're all alike when they get into a state about it. [*She goes out, having gathered Balsquith's Suffraget disguise from the desk*].

MITCHENER. Is Mr Balsquith not with them.

THE ORDERLY. No, sir. Couldnt stand Mrs Banger, I expect. Fair caution she is. [*Chuckling*] Couldnt help larfin when I sor im op it.

MITCHENER [*highly incensed*] How dare you indulge in this unseemly mirth in the presence of your commanding officer? Have you no sense of a soldier's duty?

THE ORDERLY [*sadly*] I'm afraid I shant ever get the ang of it, sir. You see, my father has a tidy little barber's business down off Shoreditch; and I was brought up to be chatty and easy-like with everybody. I tell you, when I drew the number in the conscription it gev my old mother the needle and it gev me the ump. I should take it very kind, sir, if you'd let me off the drill and let me shave you instead. You'd appreciate my qualities then: you would indeed, sir. I shant never do myself jastice at soljerin,